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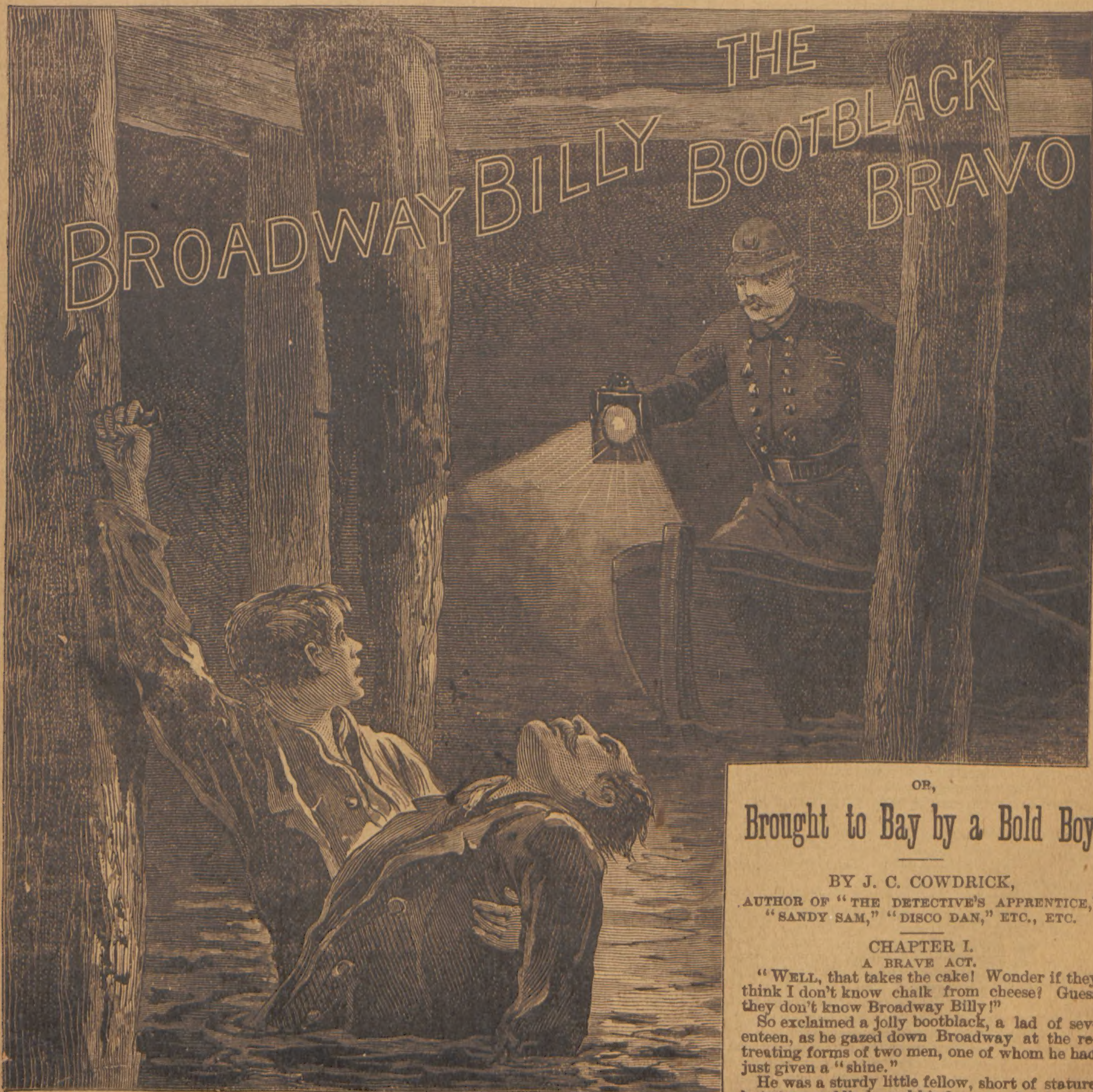
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"HOLD FAST, MY BOY, HOLD FAST!" THE OFFICER CRIED, NOW CATCHING SIGHT OF BILLY; "WE'LL HAVE YOU IN A MINUTE."

OR,
Brought to Bay by a Bold Boy.

BY J. C. COWDRICK,
AUTHOR OF "THE DETECTIVE'S APPRENTICE,"
"SANDY SAM," "DISCO DAN," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.
A BRAVE ACT.

"WELL, that takes the cake! Wonder if they think I don't know chalk from cheese? Guess they don't know Broadway Billy!"

So exclaimed a jolly bootblack, a lad of seventeen, as he gazed down Broadway at the retreating forms of two men, one of whom he had just given a "shine."

He was a sturdy little fellow, short of stature but strong of limb, and his face was bright and intelligent in its expression. He had black hair and eyes, and was passably good-looking; was

clad in a suit of time-worn but still serviceable clothes, a cloth cap crowned his head, and over his left shoulder hung the insignia of his calling—his box, containing brushes, etc.

This boy's name was William Weston, but he was better known as "Broadway Billy," a name which had been given him by his boy companions, owing to the fact that he was seldom to be found off that great thoroughfare during business hours, and never solicited trade elsewhere. In fact, few knew him by any other name than the latter.

Billy had just given a customer a "shine," as stated, and having picked up his box, stood watching him and a companion as they went away.

"Yes, sir—ce! that takes th' cake!" he repeated. "They must think 'cause I'm small I'm of no account. I'll have ter show 'em 'bout that, I guess."

One of the two men, a few minutes previously, had placed his foot upon Billy's box, and while the boy was at work the other man came up. The two shook hands, and then fell into conversation, and it was what they said that caused the bootblack to gaze after them and give vent to his thoughts as quoted.

Billy continued to watch the men until they were lost to sight in the throng, and then he turned and sauntered up the street, speaking his thoughts half-aloud.

"Don't know whar that feller is, th' one I shined up," he muttered, "but I know th' other one like a mice. He's Dan Bingham, or 'Sharkey Dan'—as th' police call him; a reg'lar out-and-out crook. Guess th' other feller must be a bird of th' same feather, seein' as he know Sharkey; but he looks like a Fifth avenue blood. And there's villainy afoot, too, I'll bet a cow. They must thought I hadn't any ears, I reckon, but I have; I heard every word they said. Seems they're goin' ter 'do' fer somebody, and I take it that 'do' means *kill*. Wish I'd heard more, fer I'm sort o' interested. No matter, though; I caught on to somethin' about Sharkey's meetin' a pard down at Dennis O'Sullivan's saloon ter-morrer night, an' I'm goin' ter be on hand. It seems this dude is ter let Sharkey know th' final plan this afternoon, an' then Sharkey an' pard is ter do th' biz. I'm goin' ter know more, you bet! I'll be on hand if I'm alive. It's some time since I've done any detective work, and if I don't look out I'll be losin' my grip. Don't want ter lose th' confidence of Inspector Br— Hello! what's all *this* excitement about?"

It was a runaway team, and men and women were hastening into the stores on both sides of the street to get out of the way.

"Look out!" "Runaway horses!" "Clear the road!" etc., were the cries heard on every hand.

"Anybody 'd think it was a cyclone a-comin', to see th' way th' people git!" Billy exclaimed contemptuously. "Seem to act as if they'd never seen a runaway afore. Guess I'll take a bird's-eye view of th' scene." And suiting action to the words, the boy sprang lightly upon the base of a lamp-post.

What he saw filled him with horror. Only a short distance away came a team of frightened, plunging horses, attached to an open carriage in which was a young and handsome woman. Just ahead was almost a blockade of trucks and other vehicles, and the young lady seemed to be riding to certain death.

Almost at the moment Billy looked, a policeman sprang out to catch hold of the reins, but missing, he was struck by the fore wheel and sent to the pavement with force, while on the horses came, the carriage swaying from side to side.

Broadway Billy took in all this at a glance, and leaping down from the lamp-post and dropping his "kit," sprang out into the street right in front of the maddened steeds.

With a cry of horror the crowd witnessed his peril, believing that he would meet instant and violent death.

On came the horses, and the next instant they were upon him, when, with a spring like a panther, the boy darted up and caught hold of the bridle of the one nearest to him.

Instantly he was jerked from the ground and carried along, but he kept his hold, and the crowd fairly held its breath in suspense.

Three or four leaps more the horses made, and then Billy's weight forced the one he had hold of to lower its head. This caused them to turn toward the opposite side of the street, their speed now reduced, and in a moment more the one Billy had hold of stumbled against the curb and fell to its knees, and they were stopped.

The young lady was saved, but the noble boy

who had risked his life so bravely lay bleeding and insensible on the sidewalk.

"Bravo!" shouted the crowd, the instant the carriage was stopped, and a dozen men sprang forward and took hold of the horses to prevent their starting off again, while others lifted up the little hero and carried him into the nearest store.

Just as they entered a middle-aged gentleman was hurrying to the door to learn the cause of the excitement.

"What's the trouble?" he demanded.

"Bad runaway," one of the men replied. "Young lady would have been killed but for this brave boy."

The merchant had barely paused for the reply, but hurried on out to see and learn for himself; and the moment his eyes fell upon the horses and carriage, he cried:

"My God! it was my daughter!"

The young lady had been assisted to alight, and was making her way toward the door of her father's store when he came out. Catching his hand, she said:

"Here I am, papa, all safe."

"Thank Heaven!" the merchant cried, leading her into the store at once. "Tell me, how did this happen?" he added.

"I hardly know," was the reply. "The horses became frightened and gave a sudden jump, throwing James from his seat, and then away they dashed. But, that brave boy—I hope he was not killed! Where is he?"

"He is here in the store. Come, we will see how badly he is hurt."

At that moment a clerk approached and said. "Mr. Warrenson, that boy seems to be pretty badly hurt. Shall we send for an ambulance?"

"No, papa, no!" the young lady hastened to say. "The boy saved my life, and he must be taken to our house."

"Very well, if you wish it," the father agreed. And then to the clerk. "No, do not call one. We will take the lad home with us."

One of the men who had carried the boy into the store was a doctor, and after examining his hurt he said it was not dangerous. The scalp was cut, but there was no fracture of the skull, and in a day or two he thought the lad would be all right again.

In the mean time an ambulance had been sent for by a policeman, and it now arrived. The policeman who had been knocked down by the carriage was put into it, and then the men entered the store to get the boy, but the merchant would not allow him to be taken.

The unfortunate policeman had received a broken leg.

In a very few minutes the excitement was all over, the crowd had dispersed, and the horses, being unhurt, were quiet and gentle once more. Nothing about the carriage or harness had been damaged, and the driver soon coming up, he being uninjured except for a few bruises, took charge of the equipage.

After the doctor had bandaged the young street boy's head he assisted to carry him out to the carriage, and then Mr. Warrenson and his daughter getting in, ordered the driver to drive home.

Half an hour later Broadway Billy, just returning to consciousness, found himself, for the first time in his life, beyond the portals of a Fifth avenue mansion.

CHAPTER II.

BILLY'S RED-LETTER DAY.

THE name of the young lady whom Broadway Billy had saved was Winnie Warrenson.

She was about twenty years of age, and as handsome and charming a girl as the city could boast.

Hamilton Warrenson, her father, was one of the leading merchants of the city, and worth a million at least. His wife was dead, and his family consisted only of himself and daughter. There were, however, a housekeeper, a companion for the daughter, and a goodly number of servants.

As soon as Broadway Billy was carried into the house the family physician was sent for, and pending his arrival the boy was put to bed in a large and pleasant room.

In a short time the physician came, and his opinion was about the same as that of the doctor who had examined Billy's wound at the store.

"A good sleep," he said, "a little medicine, and to-morrow he will be as good as new."

"Oh! I am so glad it is no worse!" the young lady exclaimed, at hearing this report.

The family physician dressed the boy's wound anew, gave him some medicine, and a short time later Billy fell asleep.

And such a sleep! it was the longest he had

ever known. It was late in the afternoon when he was put to bed; when he awoke it was after eight o'clock in the morning.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, sitting up in bed, "where am I?"

At that moment a door opened and a servant entered.

"Ah! my lad, awake, eh?" he said.

"Give it up!" Billy responded. "Seems to me I must be a-dreamin'."

The servant laughed.

"Oh! no, you're not," he rejoined. "Do you not remember the runaway—?"

"Oh! yes, I remember now. And where am I?"

"Why, you're here."

"So I see. What I mean ter say, though, whose house is this?"

"It is the residence of Mr. Hamilton Warrenson, No. — Fifth avenue."

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed, as he looked around, "this'll be a sort o' red-letter day on my calendar, I reckon!"

"Well," the servant inquired, "how do you feel?"

"Bully!" Billy declared. "There's a sore spot on my head, but otherwise I feel good. Say, got anything to eat?"

"You're hungry, eh?"

"Hungry! I should say so! Why, th' main part o' my livin' is th' little I eat!"

"Well, you shall have breakfast soon. I have come to give you a bath, and—"

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy exclaimed again.

"Say, I think I'd better be goin'. I'm not used ter this sort o' thing, and I'm 'fraid it'll prove fatal."

The servant carried his point, though, and the young bootblack enjoyed a bath such as he had never before known. Then, instead of his old garments he found new ones, just his fit, which the man assured him were his; underclothes, shirt, stockings—a full outfit, even to shoes and hat. Then followed a breakfast worthy of a king.

The boy's tongue ran so incessantly that the man was no doubt glad when his task was done.

"Now," he said, as he was about to leave the room, "there are plenty of books and pictures, my lad, and you can amuse yourself until Miss Warrenson comes to see you."

"All right," Billy answered; "I'll try to make myself at home. I'll be glad when this circus is over, though," he added to himself, "fer I don't feel jest right to be playin' gentleman. Besides, I wonder where my box is? Don't want to lose *that*."

About ten o'clock came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" Billy invited, promptly.

The door opened, and Miss Winnie Warrenson entered.

Billy dropped a book he was looking at, and rose to his feet bashfully.

"Oh do not rise!" the young lady exclaimed, instantly. "Pray sit down again. I have come to inquire how you are, and to thank you for the great service you rendered me yesterday. But for you I would have been killed."

"I feel first rate," Billy replied, as he resumed his seat. "I've had such a bul—I mean such a *good* sleep, that I feel as good as new. As fer what I done, that was nothin'. Anybody else could 'a' done th' same thing."

"Do not say that now," the young lady interposed, "for it is not true. Or at least if anybody else *could* have done the same no one tried, except one policeman, and he unfortunately got hurt. No, I owe it all to *you*, and I can never repay my debt of gratitude. May I ask your name?"

"My name is Broadway Billy."

"That is surely not your *real* name, though."

"Well, no; but then you see it's th' one I'm best known by. My real name is Billy Weston, if I remember right."

"What a droll fellow you are! What do you do for a living?"

"I am a leather-polisher by trade."

"You have a trade, then. Are you not young to have a trade?"

"Oh! no. I commenced when I was 'bout seven years old."

"Indeed! And how old are you now?"

"Seventeen."

"I am surprised. I fancied boys began to learn a trade at seventeen (or eighteen and finished at twenty-one."

"I'm afraid you don't catch on right," Billy observed. "I'm a bootblack."

"Oh! I see," and then the young lady laughed merrily.

Presently she remarked:

"Would you not like to change your business

for something more gentlemanly? I think I can get you a place in my papa's store."

Billy's face grew red in an instant. "See here, ma'am," he admonished, "I mean no offense, fer I'm very thankful fer all ye've done fer me; but if you think a counter-jumpin' dude is more of a gentleman than a bootblack, ye miss yer fire. That is, pervidin' th' aforesaid bootblack is honest and true-blue, like yours truly. No sir-ee! I don't take no back seat fer any of 'em."

"Oh! I did not mean to offend you: I was merely comparing your calling to that of the young men in my father's employ. You will surely admit that their position in life is above yours."

"Nary a time, I don't!" Billy cried. "They're nothin' but servants, at 'so much a week, while I'm doin' business for myself, same's your dad, only on a smaller scale."

Again the young lady laughed heartily. It was her first tilt with a gamin of the streets.

"Then you do not care to change your business?"

"No, not at present. When I do, I've got my eye focused onto a corner stand."

"Well, we will say no more about it now. Will you come down to my sitting-room?"

"Don't know 'bout that, ma'am. It seems ter me I'd orter be goin'."

"Oh! no indeed! you must not go—at least not until to-morrow. The doctor will be here presently, and then we shall learn how your wound is. Come, I will conduct you down."

"Well," Billy agreed, as he rose to follow his fair hostess, "I'll stay till th' doctor comes, but I can't stay any longer! Ye see, a businessman can't afford to be idle."

Miss Warrenson led the way to her little sitting-room, and then insisted that the boy should lie down on an invalid's reclining-chair which she had prepared for him. Billy objected strongly, but his objections were useless, so he obeyed.

For a time the young lady chatted away pleasantly to him, and then came the old physician to see how he was.

"Getting on finely!" he declared, when he had taken the bandage from the boy's head and put a plaster on instead. "A little more rest and you will be all right." And leaving a little more medicine, with instructions that it be given immediately, he went away.

"Now, ma'am," said Billy, "I don't think it's necessary fer me ter take that stuff at all. I feel good, and if ye'll have my old clothes done up in a bundle fer me, I think I'll be goin'."

"No, I will not hear of it!" Miss Warrenson exclaimed. "You must take this medicine, and you must remain here till papa returns from business this afternoon, at least. Now, not a word, sir! I will not allow you to go."

"Well, if I must I s'pose I must," cried Billy, resignedly.

"There, sir, not another word! I will not have it!" and the young lady shook her finger at him pleasantly. "Take your medicine, now, and remain quiet."

Billy took the medicine, settled back upon the yielding cushions of the chair, and in a short time was fast asleep.

CHAPTER III.

BILLY AWAKE.

WHEN Billy awoke, some time later, he heard voices.

The chair upon which he lay had been drawn back behind a screen, and could not be seen by any one on the opposite side of the room.

Billy was just on the point of getting up, when the voice of one of the speakers held his attention.

He had heard that voice before!

Leaning forward, he peered through the interstices of the screen and beheld two persons, one of whom was Miss Warrenson, and the other, much to his surprise, was the man whose boots he had blackened on the previous afternoon, a few minutes before the runaway, and who had gone off in company with Dan Bingham, or "Sharkey Dan."

Instantly Billy recalled the words he had heard pass between the two men, and all the "detective" of his nature asserted itself.

He was, indeed, wide awake now.

"There's somethin' stale in Denmark," he muttered, "and I'm goin' ter know what it is. I don't like that feller's phiz fer a cent."

The first words he caught were uttered by the man, and it was evident the conversation was about at an end.

"And your answer, Winnie—Miss Warrenson," he was saying, "what is it? For Heaven's sake, do not say me nay!"

"My answer must be the same now as it has been before," the young lady answered. "Justin Blakesland, I can never become your wife."

"That's his name, eh?" the young detective mused. "I'll remember that. Justin Blakesland—a J and a B; that's easy to hold."

The man's face paled, and he drew back a step.

"And your answer is final?" he queried.

"Yes, final; and I hope you will never refer to the subject again."

"But, your reason? Surely you will tell me frankly why you can never marry me?"

"It is because I do not care for you, except in a friendly way. Let us talk of something else."

"Very well, I will say no more now. I will take my leave. But, Miss Warrenson, I do not give up hope that I shall yet win your hand."

As he spoke the man rose from his chair, drawing a handkerchief from a side pocket, and as he did so Billy saw an envelope fall from his pocket to the floor. This was evidently not seen by the lady, as a table stood between them.

"It is useless for you to hope," the lady responded, "and I hope you will dismiss the thought."

"Never! I love you—my heart is not my own, and I shall move all Heaven and earth to win your love in return. Good-afternoon!"

Miss Warrenson responded to his adieu, and he left the room, she rising and turning to a window.

Instantly Broadway Billy slipped from his chair, stepped quickly and silently around the screen, and picking up the letter the man had dropped thrust it into his pocket.

"No," Miss Warrenson was saying to herself, "it can never be. He says his heart is not his own; neither is mine. What if he knew that I am the promised wife of his cousin—George Stidwell?"

Billy's ears were open wide, but he heard no more.

"There's another name fer me ter freeze on to," he thought. "George Stidwell—a G and a S; I'll remember it." And then he said:

"Scuse me, ma'am, but I've woke up."

"Oh, are you awake?" and the young lady turned around, smiling. "How long have you been awake?"

"Only a minute, ma'am. Jest got my winkers open. Say, what day is this?"

"This is Tuesday."

"And yesterday was Monday?"

"Certainly."

"And I was here only one night."

"Of course. But, why do you ask such questions?"

"'Cause I want ter know jest how I stand. I thought it was all right, but wanted to be sure of it. Now, ma'am, if ye'll give me my old togs I'll be moseyin'."

"What?"

"I mean ter say give me my old clothes and I'll skip, dust, take myself off, as it were."

"Oh! you mean you want to go?"

"Cert."

"Well, you must not go until papa returns. He will be here in an hour, and I am sure he wants to see you."

"Can't help it, ma'am, I've got to go. Got a 'p'intment that I can't put off. Had forgot all about it till a few minutes ago. Hate to tear myself away, but it's got ter be did."

"No, you must not go! You must at least wait—"

"Can't wait a minute, ma'am. I've got to go."

"Well, if you are really determined to go—"

"And I am, fer a fact. This ain't no steer I'm givin' ye, ma'am, but th' plain fact. Please give me my old duds, now, and I'll amble."

Laughing at the boy's earnest manner and quaint words, the lady touched a bell and summoned a servant.

"Are this boy's old clothes done up in a bundle?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," the servant replied.

"Then bring the bundle here."

The servant went out, and then turning to Billy, Miss Warrenson added:

"Since you are bound to go, please give me your address."

"What fer?" Billy demanded.

"I may want to call on you."

"Be no use, ma'am. Ye'd never find me home. I'm out early and in late, every day."

"But, I might send a letter—"

"Oh! if ye want ter send a letter," Billy interrupted, "jest mark it 'Broadway Billy, in care of Inspector Br—' Hold on, though;

maybe ye'd better mark it 'Billy Weston, No. — Centre street.'"

"Or, better still," observed the lady, "can you not call here a week from to-day and ask for me?"

"Reckon I kin, ma'am."

"Please do so, then."

"All right; I will."

The servant now returned, bringing the bundle, which Billy laid hold of at once.

"Good-by, ma'am," he said, backing toward the door, "and thank ye fer yer kindness."

"Good-by, my little hero, and thank you for my life. Do not forget to come as you promise."

"No, ma'am; I never forgit a promise."

Miss Warrenson instructed the servant to show him out, and in a moment more the boy was on the street.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, as he glanced back at the house, "but that's a dandy place ter live! Wonder if I'll ever own a house like that? May, sometime, after I git started in th' corner stand I've got my eye on. But, now fer biz! I guess I'd 'a' forgot all 'bout that meetin' down to Dennis O'Sullivan's ter-night, if I hadn't happened to see that dude feller again. Wants ter marry Miss Warrenson, eh? No go, though. She won't have him, and bully fer her! He's N. G. He's too snakey 'bout th' eyes ter suit me. Wonder what's in this letter he dropped? I'll investigate th' dockymint soon's I git home. And then fer biz! Wonder where my box is, though? That's what aggeritates th' serenity o' my mind at present. Reckon it'll turn up, though."

And so the boy talked on, half aloud, until he reached his humble home, where he found his widowed mother becoming very anxious about him.

In the meantime Billy had not been gone more than two minutes from the Warrenson residence when Justin Blakesland returned and asked to see Miss Warrenson for a moment again.

The young lady came down to the parlor.

"I miss a letter which I thought was in my pocket when I came here, Miss Warrenson," Blakesland said, "and think I may have dropped it here. Have you seen it?"

"No, I have not," was the reply.

"Then of course I did not lose it here," Blakesland said. "Pardon me for troubling you."

"No trouble, sir. If a letter is found I will send it to you. Is it addressed to yourself?"

"No, it is addressed to one Bingham. But, it is of no moment, and again I beg your pardon." And the man went away.

"Confound it!" he muttered, "what can I have done with it? Can it be that I sealed and posted it? I certainly did not intend to till after my call on Miss Warrenson. What if I have lost it there? But, she would never think of reading it; she is too honorable; and if she did—well, I guess it would puzzle her a little. No, I must have posted it; but to be sure, I shall have to write another. Serves me right, for not being more careful."

CHAPTER IV.

BILLY HAS A FIGHT.

BROADWAY BILLY, as soon as he had told his mother about his adventure, proceeded to change his clothes, putting on his old ones again.

"Don't feel jist right in new togs," he said. "Sides, I want ter keep 'em fer Sundays. Sweet pertaters! won't my gal open her eyes some! She'll think I've come inter a fortune. There! now I feel more at easy—so ter say."

Having put his new outfit carefully away, the boy proceeded next to learn what was in the letter he had found.

The envelope was directed to—"Daniel Bingham, in care of D. O'Sullivan, No. 621 — street, N. Y. City," and bore a "Special Delivery" stamp.

"Wanted it ter go sooner than quick, I guess," Billy remarked to himself. "Now let's see what he's got ter say." And as he muttered the words he drew forth the sheet the envelope contained.

The sheet contained but a few words, as follows:

"SHARKEY:—
Tales. No. Telis. Best. River. Well. Job.
Do. And. Brinton. See. Sure. Be. Astor.
Stop. Will. Midnight. City. Reach. S. B.
"J. G."

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy ejaculated, the instant he opened it, "what sort o' lingo is this! Wonder how they expect a detective is ter make head or tail of it? 'Sharkey' is all plain enough, and so is 'J. B.', meanin' Justin Blakesland; but what th' merry muggins is th' rest of

it! 'Tales—no—tells'—there's no sense to that as I kin see. 'Reach—S.—G.'—wonder what that means? Now if it was only a G and a S, I'd say 'George Stidwell,' but it— Hold on, though, mebbly it is meant to be read some other way. Let's see how it goes t'other end foremost. 'G.—S.—Reach—City—Midnight,'—that's it, fer ducats! I'll be a detective yet, you bet! I'll be one of Inspector Br— But, there's no time fer me ter set here and chin, fer biz is biz and I must hump myself around lively. I'll seal this letter up, so, and when I go out I'll post it and let it go. Old dude Blacklands—or Blakesland will fergit and think he did it himself. Then I'll skip over to Broadway and see if I kin find my box, and then fer Dennis O'Sullivan's.

"Yes, sir-ee, that's th' hull business!" his thoughts ran, as he put on his cap and set out. "Dude Backstands—I mean Blakesland—wants Sharkey ter know that George Stidwell will reach th' city about midnight, and will hang up at th' Astor House, and wants Sharkey ter see Brinton, whoever he is, and do th' job. Wants 'em ter do it well, and thinks th' river's best, as it tells no tales. Oh! I've got 'em, sure! Don't jest see what's th' best way ter sp'ile their fun, but reckon I'll be on hand at O'Sullivan's, and find out what they're up to; and then lay at th' Astor House fer Stidwell and put him onto th' racket. I'm fly, every time. I'll show Inspector Br— Here's a letter-box, and I'll drop this dokeyment in."

Stepping up to the box Billy deposited the letter, and then went to Broadway.

Coming out upon that thoroughfare he was just in time to meet a boy whom he knew, a bootblack like himself.

"Hello! Skinny," he exclaimed, "how goes it?"

"Hello! Billy, is that you?" the other boy returned. "Where ye been? Thought ye was in th' horsepistol—er I mean ter say th' hoss-pittles. Glad ter see ye."

"Well, if it ain't me, Skinny, I reckon it ain't nobody else. As ter where I've been, ye wouldn't believe me if I told ye, so it don't matter. Say, though, you was here yesterday when I got my pun'kin 'n'sted, wasn't ye?"

"Yes, and I thought they toted ye off in that hoss-pittles baroosh."

"Well, they didn't. What I want ter git at, though, did you see what become o' my box?"

"Yes; meant ter tell ye soon's I sot eyes on ye, too. Pug-nose Jake's got it. He picked it up, and to-day he's usin' it. He's scraped your name off and put his on it. Guess he's got it fer keeps."

"Well, I guess he ain't, then! I'll bend his ear fer him, you see if I don't."

"He's bigger'n what you be, though."

"Don't care if he is! He's got ter fork over that box, or else I'll break his eye. Where is he?"

"Seen him up by other corner only a minute ago."

"Well, ef I kin find him you bet your life I'll dent his chin fer him. He's been wantin' somebody ter whollop him fer a good while. Come on, Skinny, and see th' fun."

And Billy strode up the street with fire in his eyes, "Skinny" following.

At the corner stood a lad about a year older than Billy, and fully a head taller. He had red hair and a freckled face, and his nose was short and had a decided turn skyward.

This was the boy Billy wanted to see.

Going straight up to him he swung him around and exclaimed:

"See here, Pug-nose, I want my box!"

"Aw, go 'way," said the usurper; "you make me tired."

"I'll make ye tireder, if ye don't fork over that box! I'll straighten that crooked nose so quick you'll think lightnin' has struck ye."

"Aw, go 'way," with a sneer; "you weary me," and "Pug-nose" turned away.

"No ye don't!" cried Billy, jerking him back. "I want that box and I'm goin' ter have it!"

"See here! d'ye know who ye're a-haulin' around? I'll punch yer head fer ye! What do I know 'bout yer box?"

"You know *all* about it! Ye've got it on yer shoulder, with my name all scratched off."

"Who says its yourn?"

"I say so! and I'm goin' ter have it!"

"Let's see ye git it, then."

"All right, here's fer it, then," and Billy let fly his right hand, giving Pug-nose a blow on the chest that caused him to stagger.

"W-what! you dare ter hit me!" he cried; "I'll crack yer skull!" and dropping the disputed box he rushed upon Billy as though to annihilate him.

Billy was ready, though, and dodging nimbly

aside, dealt the bully a blow under the ear that knocked him down.

"Bully fer you!" cried Skinny. "Give it to him again!"

Pug-nose was up in a moment, fairly boiling with rage, and made another furious onslaught.

Quite a crowd had now collected, for it takes but a moment for one to form on so busy a street, and Billy, being the smaller and lighter of the two, everybody sided with him.

On came Pug-nose, and aimed a heavy blow right at Billy's face. Out shot the arm, and quick as a wink Billy dodged to the left, letting the fist pass harmlessly by his ear. Then, out went Billy's right arm, his fist finding the bully's eye, and causing him to utter a cry of pain. Quick as lightning then came another blow, Billy dodged to the right, and then next instant his left fist was planted against Pug's left eye. Then out shot his right, taking the bully under the ear, as before, and he was sent sprawling again, much to the delight of the onlookers.

"Cheese it! cheese it!" Skinny at that moment cried; "here comes th' coppers!"

Broadway Billy grabbed up his box at once, darted through the crowd, and was away down a cross-street like a flash, and a moment later two policemen laid the "hands of law and order" upon Pug-nose Jake.

The whole fray had not lasted more than a minute, and Billy had come out first best by a large majority. He had his box; Pug-nose had two eyes that were rapidly swelling and turning black.

"Where's the other feller?" the policeman demanded.

"Skipped," answered Skinny, briefly.

Unable to find Billy, and learning that he had begun the fight, the policemen allowed Pug-nose to go, warning him not to be caught fighting again.

Billy went straight home, to leave his box and get his supper.

"Hain't made much ter-day, mom," he said, as he was rising from the table. "Hain't made nothin', in fact, 'cept them new togs. Mebbly I've got some change left, though," as he began to feel in his pockets; "let's see."

Billy was in the habit of giving his good mother the greater part of his earnings every night.

"Nothin' here," he remarked, "nor here; here's ten cents though. Guess— Hello! what's this?" and he drew a very small packet from his vest pocket.

"Sweet pertaters!" he cried, as he opened it, "look here!" And holding his out hand he displayed five new, bright and shining five-dollar gold-pieces.

"Sweet pertaters! this must be a present from Miss Warrenson. Bully fer her! Here, mom," tossing the coins into his mother's lap, "you take 'em. Don't be worried if I don't git in early, fer I'm doin' detective work now." And waiting only long enough to give her an idea of his plans, he put on his cap and hurried away.

CHAPTER V.

BILLY GETS NABBED.

BROADWAY BILLY went at once to the neighborhood of O'Sullivan's saloon, and by the time he reached there it was growing dark.

He was just in time to see a postman enter the saloon.

"Hello!" the boy exclaimed, half-aloud, "there goes th' special letter fer Sharkey!"

So it was, but it was not the one Billy had posted.

"Now," Billy mused, "how am I ter go ter work? I've got ter hear what's said, or I'm no detective a tall. Let's see, how'm I ter do it? I wonder if Sharkey's in there? Guess I'll take a look and see."

Crossing the street, the boy entered the saloon boldly. The postman was just coming out, and Sharkey Dan was seated by a table at the rear of the room.

Billy glanced around, as though looking for some one, and apparently not finding the person he was in search of, passed out again.

"Yes, sir-ee!" he muttered, as he strolled a few steps away, "there he is as big as life. Now, how in th' name o' bald-head bumblebees am I ter git in where I kin hear what's said when t'other feller comes? Give it up!—no, hang me if I do, either; detectives don't give up so easy. There must be some way o' doin' it, and I'm goin' ter find out what it is."

Retracing his steps to the saloon, Billy looked in again.

Sharkey Dan was not to be seen.

"Well, choke me fer a jabberin' fool!" Billy's thoughts ran, "if he ain't gone and skipped. Don't matter, though, come ter think of it. If I miss him I kin go and lay fer Stidwell at th' Astor House and tell him to keep his eyes skinned fer danger. How'm I ter find out whether Dan's gone or not, though. It strikes me my detective ability is weakenin'. It won't do fer Inspector Br— Hello! there's Sharkey, though, jest comin' out o' that back room."

The man was just emerging from a little room at the end of the saloon, and going straight to the bar he said:

"Denny, I'm goin' out a minute. Keep th' room fer me, and if Burke comes tell him to wait for me."

"All right," the proprietor answered.

Broadway Billy heard.

"Now," he muttered, "this is my best chance. But, how am I ter profit by it. It's a pity I wasn't born with more brains and less tongue. Let's see, I wonder if there ain't more doors than one leadin' to that room? Shouldn't wonder if there was a Sunday entrance somewheres 'round. Come, Billy, see if ye can't wake up."

The saloon was in what seemed to be a tenement-house, and there was a hall entrance on one side.

Into that hall the young bootblack slipped. It was almost dark by this time, and the hall lamp not being lighted, it was quite dark in there.

Billy made his way silently to the end of the hall, feeling for a door, and right at the end of the hall he found one.

Turning the knob very cautiously he tried the door, finding it unlocked, and then he carefully opened it an inch and peered within. No one was there, and opening it a little more the boy slipped in, closing it after him.

It was a small room, containing a table and half a dozen chairs, and along one side were ranged several barrels of liquor. Over the table burned a jet of gas.

"Well, here I am," Billy muttered, "but, I wonder if I'm in th' right room? How kin I find that out? Why, I'll jest open this other door th' width of a split red hair, and see if th' saloon is there. Reckon it must be, though, by th' sound o' things. Yes," having peered out, "there it is. Now, where'm I ter hide my precious carcass? Why, right here behind these barrels, of course. Guess this place was made-a-purpose fer sich biz."

Getting around behind the barrels carefully, Billy sat down on the floor and waited.

It seemed an age to him, but at the end of half an hour some one entered the room.

Peering out from his hiding-place, Billy beheld one of the most villainous faces he had ever seen. The man was a stranger to him.

This man was one Burke Brinton, commonly known as "Big Burke."

"Wants me ter wait, does he?" the man growled. "Wal, I won't wait over a week, he kin bet on that! Wonder what he wants o' me, anyhow?"

While muttering these words the man sat down, throwing his feet up on the table and leaning back in his chair.

A few minutes later Sharkey Dan came in.

"Hello! Burke, old man, how goes it?" he exclaimed, extending his hand.

"Purty good," Burke answered, giving his hand, lazily; "how's yerself?"

"Fine! You're on hand, I see."

"Yes; I want ter find out what ye meant by havin' a thousand dollars fer me. Was ye givin' me a stand-off?"

"No, sir, Burke, I wasn't. I've got a little job fer ye ter-night that will put jest one thousand dollars clean cash inter yer pocket."

"Name yer job, pardner."

Needless to say that Broadway Billy was "all ears," as the saying is.

"Well, you're wanted to give a feller a bath—in th' East River."

"Who's th' feller?"

"There, now comes th' business part. You're to do th' job without axin' any questions. You ain't to know who th' feller is nor who ye're doin' th' job fer. I'm ter show ye th' man, you're to 'do' him, an' then I'm to give ye th' thousand."

"Got th' scads with ye?"

"I've got two hundred dollars of it with me, which I'll pay ye in advance."

"All right; I'm yer man. Fork over, and then give me the plan o' action. Can't make a thousand any easier, as I kin see."

"You're right; and here's yer money. Count it."

Burke ran over the bills Sharkey handed him, finding the amount correct.

"Jest even two hundred," he said, as he thrust the money into his pocket.

At that moment came a knock at the door.

"Come in!" called out Sharkey.

O'Sullivan entered, bearing another letter.

"Another letter fer ye, Sharkey," and deliver- ing it, he went out at once.

This was the letter Billy had read and posted.

Opening it at once, Sharkey read it aloud, in a low tone, as follows:

"G. S.—that's your man—'reach city mid- night.' Hold on, though. I'll begin over again and put in th' little words, as they're left out. 'G. S. will reach the city about midnight, and will stop at the Astor House. Be sure and see —' —meanin' you—and do the job well. The river is the best, as it tells no tales."

"Who's that from?" asked Burke.

"From th' party we're doin' this job for. I got another one a short time ago, and—but I'll read it to ye."

And, taking a letter from his pocket, Sharkey read:

"If you get two letters, don't be at all sur- prised. I had one written before this one, but don't know whether I've posted it or lost it— looks as though he posted it, seem' as it's here— 'so I write this to be sure.' Then he repeats th' other letter, addin': 'Don't fail!'"

"That sounds like biz," Big Burke declared.

"It is biz," Sharkey asserted. "Our man is all business."

"Well, what's th' plan o' action?"

"I'll tell ye. I've got a note here fer this party, G. S., and I'm goin' ter see that he gets it when he comes. He's comin' from Washin'- ton. We'll lay fer him at th' ferry, to make sure what hotel he goes to, and then I'll leave th' note fer him. This note calls him to a very important meeting at Pier No. —, East River, and there he'll meet you."

"But d'ye s'pose he'll go there?"

"Oh, he'll go fast enough. This note will trouble his mind so he can't help it."

"S'pose he brings help?"

"Well, if he does, we'll do fer them, too; but he won't. We've laid every plan with care. I'm to be there to see that you do th' job right, and while I'm talkin' to him you're to slip up behind and lay him out. Oh, it's a sure thing, and can't fail."

"It kin fail, if somebody should git onto th' racket an' lay fer us; or if somebody happens ter see th' biz, it'll be sort o' bad."

"Nobody is likely to get onto th' racket; an' as fer th' other, we must take th' chances. You can't expect to make a thousand dollars without some risk."

"No, ye're right. How much d' you git outen th' thing?"

"Five hundred."

This was a lie. Sharkey Dan had taken the job in hand with the understanding that he was to receive ten thousand dollars, one thousand of which had been paid in advance.

Had Big Burke known this, he would un- doubtedly have struck for a larger share of the spoils.

After discussing their plans for some time longer, Sharkey Dan remarked that they might as well spend a few hours there as elsewhere, and Burke agreeing, he ordered some liquor and a pack of cards.

"Sweet pertaters!" Broadway Billy exclaimed under his breath, "now I am in a fix! How in th' name o' hoss-flies be I goin' ter git out o' here? This is somethin' I didn't figger on. I've got th' pints all down fine, and now I want ter go. Wonder if I can't dodge across th' floor, fling open th' door and skip out 'fore they know what's th' matter? Guess I'll have ter try it, seein' as there's no other chance. Here goes, anyhow."

Creeping down to the end of the row of bar- rels as stealthily as a cat, Billy rose up, and then, quick as a flash, he darted to the door, reaching it before the two men could make a move. And he would have escaped, easily, but the door refused to open. It was locked.

"By thunder! a spy!" cried Burke, and ere the boy could turn to spring to the other door he was in the villain's powerful grasp.

CHAPTER VI.

A HEINOUS DEED.

THE Bootblack Bravo, as Billy was quite fre- quently called, instantly realized his danger, and struggled hard to get away; but his strug- gles were in vain.

"Dast yer eyes!" cried Burke, giving him a hearty shake, "you've been playin' th' spy on us!"

"What d'ye take me fer?" Billy demanded. "I've been asleep."

"That won't go down!" exclaimed Sharkey. "What made ye in sich a mighty hurry ter git out?"

"'Cause I thought you was th' boss of th' place, and if ye got hold o' me ye'd boot me."

"Too thin, my boy. It's too early in th' day fer you to be asleep."

"In course it is!" cried Burke. "He's been listenin', that's what he's been doin', an' he's got ter pay fer it."

"Please let me go, mister," Billy begged. "Ye won't see me 'round here no more, I prom- ise ye."

"Tell us what ye heard us sayin'," Burke enjoined, "an' we'll see then 'bout lettin' ye go. Come, now, what did ye hear?"

"Didn't hear much," Billy asserted at once. "When I woke up I heard ye sayin' somethin' 'bout stayin' here a little time and playin' cards; and thinkin' it was 'bout time fer me ter git, I up and got."

"What d'ye think?" queried Burke, turning to Sharkey.

"Now, lad," Sharkey warned, without an- swerin' his confederate, "we want th' truth. When did you come in here?"

"Oh! a good while ago," Billy replied, obliged to resort to falsehood under the circum- stances. "I came in here long before dark, and been asleep ever since."

"What did ye come in here for?"

"Ter go to sleep."

"Thunder! will you answer my questions, or won't you?"

"Course I will. Fire away, now, and I'll an- swer so quick it'll make yer head swim."

After the first consternation at being cap- tured, Billy was regaining his nerve.

"Tell me, then," Sharkey demanded in fierce tones, "why ye came in here ter go to sleep?"

"'Cause I was sleepy, and this place was handy. I'm a poor orphan, never had any father or mother, and I've got no home. Sleep where I kin. I 'most allus put up at th' Fifth Avenue Hotel, when I'm near there, but when I ain't I bunk down wherever it comes handy. Long 'bout three or four o'clock this afternoon I felt a little sleepy, and looked around ter see where I'd crawl away too. Seen th' hall door of this shebang open, and in I marched. Makin' my way down th' hall I soon came to a door. Openin' that door, I found myself in here. Findin' myself in here, I spied these barrels. Havin' spied th' barrels, I took a look behind 'em; and havin' looked a took—I mean tooked a look behind 'em, I crawled right in and went ter sleep. There ye have it, horns and tail throwed in."

The two villains looked at each other, not knowin' whether to believe this story or not.

"Well, what d'ye think?" Burke asked again.

"Hang me if I know what to think!" Sharkey exclaimed. "He may be tellin' th' truth, Burke."

"Yes, he may, an' then ag'in he mayn't."

"That's so."

"An' s'pose he's lyin' to us, then what?"

"Oh! but I ain't!" Billy interposed. "Can't ye see by my eye that I'm givin' it to ye straight?"

"You've got too much tongue," said Sharkey. "You'd better be careful how you let it run, too."

"Say, lad," Burke here put in, "have you ever been in here afore?"

"Not as I knows on," Billy replied, "but then I can't say fer sure. I crawl into so many places ter sleep that it's likely enough I have. Come, though, let a feller go. If ye do I'll make tracks from here so fast that—"

"Look here!" Sharkey suddenly exclaimed, "where have I seen you before?" and he jerked Billy around a little more to the light.

"Give it up," Billy responded promptly, though at the same time he felt his heart sink a little.

"I'll tell ye where it was, it was on Broadway yesterday afternoon."

"Likely enough. I promenade that great thoroughfare of wealth and beauty quite fre- quently, and—"

"Shut up! When I saw you, you was jest blackin' a gentleman's shoes, and I stepped up and talked with the gent while he stood there, and then went away with him. Do you remem- ber that?"

"D'ye s'pose I kin remember every little thing that happens durin' business hours? Why, some- times when I'm doin' a shine I git ter thinkin' 'bout my gal, and—"

"Oh! bawl off!" cried Burke, giving him a shake. And then to Sharkey—"Is he th' feller ye seen, pard?"

"He is, Burke, fer a fact, and he's a-playin' "

spy on us, too. Th' man he was shinin' was our friend, and him and me was talkin' 'bout th' case a little, and I told him I was ter meet you here to-night. If he ain't a-spyin', it looks a good deal like it."

At that instant Billy gave a sudden and furi- ous jerk, tore himself from Burke's grasp and made a spring for the door opening into the saloon.

One brief second more and he would have been out, but Sharkey Dan was too quick for him and pulled him back.

"Let me go!" Billy ordered. "If ye don't I'll holler like a wild Injun."

"Ye will, will ye?" cried Burke. "We'll see 'bout that!" And he clapped his hand over the boy's mouth with force. "Ye will, eh?" he re- peated, and taking his handkerchief he proceed- ed to gag the little fellow effectually. "Thar! now let's hear ye holler!"

"Now, Burke," said Sharkey, seriously, "what's goin' ter be done? If we could only know fer sure, but we don't; and as I said, it looks might s'picious!"

"In course it does! It's too big a risk ter run ter let him go. It can't be did. I'm hard up, an' I ain't goin' ter let no kid stand 'tween me an' a cool thousan', nary time!"

"Same here," declared Sharkey, as he thought of what he would lose if the plot were exposed. "We can't take th' chances."

"In course we can't! an' th' sooner we do fer him, th' better. Jest lock that door there, an' bolt th' other one. I'll 'tend to him."

Broadway Billy was now frightened. It was clear that these villains meant to murder him. They believed that he had overheard their plots and plans, and if he had, their safety depended on his silence.

In vain did he struggle to get away. His strength was as nothing against theirs.

"Oh! ye kin squirm," hissed Burke, "but it won't do ye a mite o' good. Ye've put yer head inter th' lion's jaws, an' now th' lion is goin' ter bite."

"That's it, exactly," added Sharkey, he hav- ing secured th' doors. "If ye're innocent o' spyin' on us it's kind o' rough on ye, but if ye're guilty it serves ye right. Anyhow, ye'll have ter die, fer we can't swear as ter what ye know an' what ye don't. Nobody knows ye're in here, and there's no chance of anybody's ever findin' yer little carcass. Guess nobody'll miss ye, though."

Billy thought of one who would miss him—his mother, and his struggles became still more des- perate.

"Squirm away, ye little cuss!" cried Burke, sneeringly. "Ye won't be squirmin' five min- utes from now, I kin tell ye."

"You're right, he won't," Sharkey agreed, as he proceeded to move back the chairs from around the table.

All this had taken place in a very few min- utes, and the two villains had spoken in tones not likely to be overheard. There was little danger of any one hearing, though, for the voices in the saloon drowned every sound in the little room.

Having moved away the chairs, Sharkey next pulled the table aside toward the wall. This done, he stooped down and took hold of a ring, and, where the table had stood, opened a large trap-door.

Instantly a foul, damp air pervaded the room.

"Come!" hissed Burke, dragging Billy for- ward, "that's to be yer everlastin' tomb, and th' sooner ye're into it, th' better. Here, Shar- key, lend a hand."

Sharkey sprang forward and caught hold of the struggling boy, and then the two ruffians lifted him up and threw him headlong into the dark and noisome hole.

Quickly, then, the trap was closed and the tables and chairs replaced, and sitting down, the murderers each took a drink of liquor and then began playing cards.

Their safety was assured, and they now wait- ed for time.

CHAPTER VII.

A VILLAIN'S PLOT.

WHEN Justin Blakesland left the Warrenson residence, after returning to inquire for his lost letter, he went at once to a sub-post-office and there wrote and posted another note to Dan Bingham, the one which that rascal received first.

From the post-office, then, he went to the Christopher street ferry of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, crossed to Hoboken, and there took a train for B—, a

town about thirty miles distant from New York.

Arriving there, he proceeded to the residence of Franklin Stidwell, his uncle, where he lived.

Franklin Stidwell was a retired broker, a man of wealth, about fifty-five years of age. He was a "self-made" man, and owed his success in life to his own business tact and unborn shrewdness. He was now very ill, almost at the point of death.

He was a widower, and had one son, George, who had been absent for several weeks on a visit to Washington, but was now expected home, having been apprised by telegraph of his father's dangerous condition.

Justin Blakesland, as stated, was Franklin Stidwell's nephew, and consequently a cousin to George. The two young men were about the same age.

Franklin Stidwell's sister had married a Blakesland, and Justin was the result of that union. He was left an orphan at an early age, and being homeless, Franklin Stidwell took him in.

The two boys grew up together like brothers, but while George was all honor and uprightness, Justin evinced a disposition inclined toward baseness and cupidity.

Franklin Stidwell was worth, perhaps, a million and a half, and these two young men were his only heirs. His will was made, and he had already informed the heirs what their portions were to be. After deducting some minor items, two thirds of his fortune was to go to his son, and the remaining one-third to his nephew. What could be more fair? But Justin Blakesland was not satisfied with this; he wanted all.

Some time after the will was made the two young men met and loved the same woman—Winnie Warrenson—and George, as we have shown, was the favored suitor.

Filled with jealous rage and hate, the villainous cousin resolved to remove George from his path, thus securing his uncle's fortune to himself, believing that he could then win the girl without trouble.

He was not yet aware, although he had every reason to believe, that Miss Warrenson was betrothed to George. But that made little or no difference to him.

When he arrived home on the day—or rather the evening, for it was evening by that time—of which we write, he went at once to his uncle's room.

"Dear uncle," he said, in a low tone, "how are you to-night?"

Mr. Stidwell turned toward him, and answered feebly:

"Bad, Justin, my boy, very bad. I fear I shall never be well again. I seem weaker every hour."

"Oh! do not tell me so!" cried the nephew, clasping his uncle's hand in his.

"Alas! I fear it is but true."

"Oh! you must not—shall not die! I will telegraph to the city at once for another physician, and—"

"No, no, it would be useless. If Doctor Pindar cannot save me, no one else can. It is time he were here now."

At that moment the door opened, and the doctor in question entered, and with a bow to Blakesland advanced at once to the bed and examined his patient.

As he did so a cloud settled over his face, and he knit his brows.

"You find me worse?" the sick man said.

"You are no better, sir," was the reply.

"I know it; I have just told Justin that I fear this is my last illness."

"Tut, tut! we won't give up yet!" the doctor exclaimed.

"Tell me, doctor," said Blakesland, "had we not better send to the city for some other physician, one whom you can recommend, in order that you may hold a consultation with him?"

"If Mr. Stidwell desires it—yes. I do not give up yet, however. I understand the case perfectly, except this strange complication, and I hope to discover that. Still, I am willing to consult with whomever you may call in."

"No, no," Mr. Stidwell protested, "call no one. I trust everything to you, Doctor Pindar."

"But, uncle, I—"

"No, no, Justin, I will not have it."

The nephew bowed his head in apparently sorrowful submission.

Doctor Pindar prepared a change of medicine, and then took his departure, or started to do so, but Blakesland followed him to the hall door.

"What is your opinion, doctor?" he asked.

"Young man," was the reply, "your uncle is very low. Still, I do not by any means give him

up. I look for a change for the better to-morrow."

"Thank God!" Blakesland exclaimed, fervently. "I hope there may be."

After supper he went into his uncle's room again.

"Uncle, is there anything I can get for you or do for you?"

"No, my dear boy, nothing," was the reply. And then the sick man asked:

"Have you heard from George?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"That he would start for home at once. He will no doubt arrive in the city at midnight, and come out in the first train to-morrow morning."

"I am glad. I must see him ere I die. He has been a dutiful son. When I am gone, Justin, you and he will be all that are left of the family tree, and you must be brothers unto each other."

"We will, uncle, never fear. But you must not think of dying. Doctor Pindar has assured me that there is yet much hope of your recovery."

"Ah! my boy, he does not know. He can only see; I can feel. No, no, the end is drawing near."

The nurse came in then, and after a few more remarks Blakesland withdrew and went to his own room.

The moment he closed his door a satanic smile appeared upon his face.

"Ah!" he muttered, "it works, it works beautifully! This night George Stidwell dies, and in a day or two the old man will follow. Then I shall be master of all, a millionaire, and Minnie Warrenson will be mine. Ha, ha, ha! there is no chance for failure now, for everything has been calculated to a nicety."

Throwing off his coat and boots he put on dressing-gown and slippers, and then lighting a cigar, threw himself down upon a lounge.

"Yes," he mused, "I shall soon be master here, and with Winnie to share my happiness, earth will be a heaven."

After finishing his cigar he took up a book and began to read, and the midnight hour found him reading still.

When the little clock on the mantle struck the hour of twelve he roused up, laid aside his book, and opened the door.

For a moment he listened, but not a sound was to be heard.

Passing out into the hall he made his way silently down the stairs, and then as silently to the door of the room where his uncle lay.

Opening the door softly, he peered within.

A very dim light was burning, and the nurse was lying on a lounge near the bed asleep.

Pushing open the door, the villain advanced stealthily into the room and toward the bed. His uncle lay with his back toward him, and was breathing heavily.

Pausing for a moment to make sure that both he and the nurse were sound asleep, Blakesland stepped to a small table where the bottles of medicine were standing, and taking up one of the bottles, the one the doctor had left that night, he poured into it a small powder.

That done, he put the stopper in the bottle, gave it a shake, and then set it down where it had stood before.

Quickly and silently, then, he left the room and went back to his own, and as he closed his door that satanic smile again swept over his face.

"Yes," he muttered, "it is mine—all mine!" and for some minutes he stood and rubbed his hands with an air of satisfaction, and then went to bed.

Meanwhile, barely had he left his uncle's room when the sick man awoke.

"James," he said, "James, where are you?"

The nurse was upon his feet in a moment.

"Here I am, sir," he said.

"How long have I been asleep?" Mr. Stidwell asked.

"About two hours, sir," the nurse replied, glancing at the clock.

"Has any one been in here?"

"No, sir."

"Have you been out?"

"No, sir."

"Then it must have been a dream. Oh! what a horrible vision I have had!"

"What was it, sir?"

"I thought I saw my son come to the foot of the bed there, all dripping with water and mud, and with a stream of blood running down his fair face."

"It was but a dream, sir. Your brain is light from your fever, and your imagination

is likely to picture any sort of unlikely things. It is time for your medicine now, sir, and as you are awake I will give it to you." And taking up a bottle, the one into which Justin Blakesland had poured the powder, he gave the poor sufferer a spoonful of its contents.

That bottle contained a quantity of slow but deadly poison!

CHAPTER VIII.

GEORGE STIDWELL'S FATE.

WHEN the passengers from the midnight train from Washington emerged from the ferry-house in New York, among them was George Stidwell.

He was a tall, finely-formed young man, with a fair and handsome face.

Two men were standing in the shadow near the exit gate when he came out, and one of them nudged the other and whispered:

"There, Burke, that's him; th' feller with th' curled mustache and carryin' th' leather grip. D'ye twig him?"

"Yes, I've got him down," was the reply, "an' now ter find where he goes to."

"Yes, that's th' main p'int now. Come on."

The two rascals had not far to go, for the young man stepped to a cab, and telling the driver to take him to the Astor House, got in.

"That settles it," said Sharkey Dan, "and now comes our work."

"Ye're right, partner," answered Burke, "an' th' sooner it's over th' better I'll be pleased. Got th' note ready?"

"Yes, it's all fixed. Come on, now, and we'll send it up."

Going to the nearest telegraph office they engaged a messenger, and in a short time the letter was on its way, while the two villains betook themselves to one of the many piers along the East River.

George Stidwell, meanwhile, had arrived at the Astor House and engaged a room, and after instructing the clerk to call him at an early hour was preparing to retire.

"Poor father!" he mused. "I hope he is better. It is too bad there is no train to B— to-night. This suspense is terrible."

He was about to disrobe when there came a knock at the door, and on opening it a waiter handed him a note.

"Where did this come from?" George inquired.

"Don't know, sah. Messenger boy just brought it in."

Closing the door again, the young man hastily tore open the envelope and read:

"GEORGE STIDWELL:—
Your life is in danger. I have, by chance, learned of something of the greatest importance for you to know. Not only is your own safety concerned, but that of a certain Miss Warrenson also. There is a foul plot to ruin your hopes and happiness. How I came to know these facts I will explain to your satisfaction. Meet me at pier No. —, East River, within an hour, and you shall know all. My reason for naming this place is, I am 'wanted' by the police and am afraid to be seen in the city. If you fear treachery, come armed. Above all, come alone. If any one is with you I shall jump into my boat and row away. My safety demands this precaution.
"FRIEND."

Never was George Stidwell more surprised. What could be the meaning of this note? and who was the mysterious "Friend?"

He read it over again and again, and each time with more confidence that the sender, whoever he was, was in thorough earnest.

George was not a man given to acting upon a hasty impulse, and weighed the matter carefully before he decided what to do. If he alone were concerned, he would dismiss the matter from his mind at once and go to bed; but he was not. The name of the girl he loved was mentioned, and if the writer of the note were honest in what he said, might not some dreadful danger be threatening her at that very moment?

Of course he could not imagine what that danger could be, but if he disregarded this warning and any harm came of it, he could never forgive himself.

No, he must go. So he decided. There was danger, he knew, but surely no fatal danger, and in any event he was armed with a good revolver and could take care of himself.

Yes, he would go.

Resuming his coat and hat, and examining his revolver to see that it was in good order, he descended to the office and said to the clerk:

"This note you sent up to me calls me out at once. I shall return within an hour. Please take charge of my money, papers, watch and so forth." And, a wise precaution, he delivered the articles named for safe-keeping.

Then he went out into the night.

George knew the city well, and walking at a quick pace, soon found himself at the pier his mysterious correspondent had named.

The pier was dark, and the young man stopped to consider the step he was about to take.

For some minutes he hesitated, as well he might, and then drawing his revolver, and holding it concealed in the breast of his coat, he strode boldly forward.

Out upon the pier he went, keeping a sharp lookout on every side for the person he expected to meet.

Near the end of the pier George caught sight of the outline of a man in the dim light, and stopped.

Then the man advanced toward him.

Just where George had paused a great pile of cotton, in bales, was lying, and the young man stepped back to that, thus to hinder any one from attacking him from behind.

When the man had advanced to within five or six paces of him, George said:

"There, do not come any nearer; you are close enough. Who are you?"

The man stopped at once, and asked:

"Are you George Stidwell?"

"Yes," answered George; "I am he. Are you the man who sent a note to me, a few minutes ago, at the Astor House?"

"I am."

"Well, what do you want? What is this great mystery you have to tell me?"

"Your life is in danger, sir. There is a feller on yer track to murder ye."

A sudden thought came to George. This man did not seem to have much of an education, to judge by his words, while the writer of the note he had received had expressed himself quite well. This could not be the author of that note.

"You say you are the man who sent that note to me?" George repeated.

"Yes."

"Did you write it yourself?"

"No, sir. I got a friend o' mine ter do it fer me."

Justin Blakesland had foreseen this point, and the man was prepared for the question.

George had more confidence now.

"How did you learn that I am in danger?" he asked.

"I heard two fellers talkin' about it," the man answered.

"When?"

"About two hours ago."

"And how did you know that I would be at the Astor House at midnight?"

"Heard th' two fellers say so."

"Well, to come to business, what is the plot you have to reveal? If you are honest, and there is truth in what you tell me, I shall reward you."

Sharkey Dan was about at the end of his prearranged dialogue, and wondered why his partner in crime did not appear upon the scene.

Knowing that he must continue the conversation, the rascal replied:

"I'll tell ye th' hull story, Mr. Stidwell, jest as I heard it, an' then ye'll know jest how th' land lays. Ye see, I was seated in a saloon about an hour ago, or mebbly a little more, when two fellers kem in and sot down right in front of me."

"Did you know them?"

Just then Sharkey beheld Burke creeping stealthily over the bales of cotton toward their victim.

"No, sir, I didn't know neither one of 'em."

"Well, go on."

"Well, one feller he sez, sez be—'How is things?' Then th' other feller he sez, sez he—'Bully, pard, how's—'"

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried George, "come to the point at once!"

Burke was right over him now, and was preparing to strike.

"Oh! I thought ye wanted th' hull thing, from b to blizzard. Well, one fel—"

Thud!—a crushing blow, and with a hollow groan George Stidwell fell senseless.

Big Burke had done his part well—too well.

Down the villain sprang, and then he and Sharkey "went through" their victim's pockets in a trice. But they found nothing to repay their trouble.

"Fooled, by the great guns!" cried Burke. "He must 'a' smelt a rat."

"Thunder! I should say so!" echoed Sharkey; "look here!" holding up the revolver. "It's lucky fer us he didn't tumble to our racket 'fore we got in our work."

"Right ye are. He fooled me a little when he backed up ag'in' this cotton. I bet he'd

been a ugly customer ter handle, pardner, if we hadn't got him foul."

"You bet he would! Come, though, this is no time fer us ter chin about it. Let's git rid o' him and light out."

"Kerrect. D'ye think he's dead? er shall I—?"

"Oh! he's dead fast enough. If he ain't he soon will be. What did ye hit him with?"

"That iron bar ye seen me have."

"Oh! he's done fer, then. See, he's a-bleedin' like a stuck pig. Come, up with him now, and over he goes."

Both laid hold of their victim, one by the feet and the other by the shoulders, and carried him to the side of the dock. Then, bending down so as to make as little noise as possible, they dropped the body into the black water below.

There was a loud splash, the water closed over the unfortunate young man, and the deed was done. The tide swept the body under the pier.

"That settles it, pardner," whispered Big Burke, with a chuckle of satisfaction, "an' now fer th' ducats."

"Yes, he's settled," Sharkey responded, "and we must git away from here on th' double-quick. Soon's we git back to O'Sullivan's I'll give ye ta' boodle. Come on!"

Half an hour later found the two red-handed rascals laughing over the success of their heinous crime, and drinking to the health of their dastardly employer.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

WHEN Broadway Billy fully realized that Sharkey Dan and Big Burke meant to throw him into the black hole the lifted trap disclosed, he certainly believed his time had come, and struggled more desperately than ever; but his struggles were useless, and in a moment he felt himself going down, down.

Then all was blank.

When consciousness returned to him, some time later, he could not at first realize where he was or what had happened. He felt sore and bruised, and there was a stinging pain in his head.

All around was darkness impenetrable.

Rubbing his eyes to make sure that he was awake, Billy sat up, and then he recalled what had taken place.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "I'm alive yet, anyhow! Thought I was done fer though, fer a fact, when they pitched me in here."

Getting up on his feet the boy looked all around, hoping to find one cheering ray of light.

"Kinder dark, too," he mumbled. "Don't believe I could see a candle burn if I had one. Might find it by lightin' a match I s'pose, and—Speakin' of matches, though, let's see if I can't find some 'round my clothes. Yes, here's two. Now fer a light."

Striking one of the matches and holding it over his head, the boy surveyed his prison—as it proved to be at first glance. He was in what seemed to be a well, though it was much larger. The wall, circular in form, was of rough stone, and quite high. To climb to the top was simply impossible.

"It'll be a sorry joke if I have ter stay here and starve," he mused. "Think I'd a heap rather not kem to at all. Th' very thought of it makes me hungry as a bear a'ready. Hillo! there goes th' match. Now I've only got one left. What'll I do with it? May as well light it and take another look I guess. It won't burn any longer by keepin'. Here goes!"

Lighting the last match, Billy looked around again.

Overhead could be dimly seen the floor of the room over the pit, on all sides there was nothing but the solid wall, and under foot was what seemed to be a bed of ashes. These ashes, being soft and yielding, had no doubt saved the boy's life.

Why ashes had been thrown in there was not easy to guess, unless to fill the hole up, or perhaps to bury the remains of other victims.

While looking about him, Billy's eyes fell upon a bar of iron, and stepping forward to where it lay, he picked it up just as his match went out.

"Kinder looks like a hopeless case, hang me if it don't," he muttered. "I 'most wish I hadn't been so mighty curious ter poke my nose inter other people's business. Couldn't help it, though, it's my natur'. 'Fraid poor George What's-his-name will go up th' flume now, sure. Wish now I hadn't been so fresh. Might 'a' knowed I'd git inter some sort o' fix."

So the boy rattled on, as much to keep up his courage as anything, perhaps.

"Wonder what time 'tis?" he presently broke out anew. "Don't reckon I've been here more'n a week. Whew! I've been in sweeter-smellin' places afore now, too. And th' main question is—how'm I ter git out? Which I'd orter thought of afore I got in. I'd like ter see some story feller come along jest now and show me how ter git out. Reckon he'd tell me ter hold my jaw and git down ter biz, and I guess that's what I'd better do."

Putting on his "thinking cap," Billy began to look his situation squarely in the face.

It was bad enough, making the best of it.

It was useless to think of climbing to the top, for it could not be done; and even were it possible, what would be gained? Nothing. The door above was no doubt secured, and in any case it could not be opened from below without some support.

One thought in that direction, and the boy gave up the idea promptly.

His next thought was to call for help, but he saw that would not do. His two enemies might still be in the room over him, and bearing him, might finish the work they had begun.

"S'pose I take a feel around," he reasoned. "Mebby I kin find a secret spring o' some sort that'll open th' way inter a grand parlor, where I'll meet th' most beautiful maiden th' world ever hatched. That ain't very likely, but mebbby I kin find a loose stone. Here goes, anyhow."

Stooping down the boy began at the bottom, and making his way slowly around, felt carefully over every inch of the wall to a height of perhaps two feet; having left his cap lying where he started so that he could know when he had made the circuit.

It seemed a hopeless task, for every stone was as solid as though it had been planted there by Nature.

Billy had made his way almost around, when suddenly he felt a current of air upon his face. He stopped instantly, and in a moment more found that the air came from a small crevice between two of the stones.

"Sweet pertaters!" he exclaimed, "I reckon I'm no slouch, after all. If I hadn't searched I wouldn't 'a' found, would I? Nary. 'Never give up' is th' motto I'm goin' ter go by after this. Mebbby I'd better not crow till I'm out of th' woods, though. Can't crawl through a hole like that, and if I could I might be no better off, fer mebbby there's another wall. Not knowin', though, I can't say. There's wall enough here, that's sure."

The boy had left the bar of iron lying beside his cap, and now he wanted it. At first he was at a loss to know how he could leave the hole he had found and be sure of finding it again, but his inventive mind rose equal to the emergency. Taking his handkerchief and stuffing one corner of it into the hole, he left it hanging there, and then as an extra precaution, removed one shoe and placed it directly under the handkerchief.

"There," he said, "I reckon that'll do."

Having placed his shoe in position, he then started to find his cap and the iron bar; and he had not far to go, for the very first step he took his foot fell right upon them. They had been lying almost within reach.

"Sweet pertaters!" he ejaculated, "all o' that trouble fer nothin'. No matter, though. I reckon it's better ter be sure than ter take chances. And now fer biz."

Putting on his shoe and cap, Billy then removed his handkerchief from the hole and thrust in the bar, but it only penetrated for a few inches, and then came to a sudden stop.

"Jest as I expected," giving a vicious poke. "I— Sweet pertaters!"

The iron struck the obstruction again, but this time it cleared its way and passed on through, and Billy heard something drop on the other side.

Not a little surprised, the lad drew the bar out again and felt for another stone. One was soon found, and a few sturdy blows forced that one out the same as the first.

"Well, this is encouragin', anyhow. If I keep on I'll soon be able to explore th' unknown regions beyond. Wonder if I'll be any better off? There goes another stone fer luck, anyhow. I'll tear th' hull place down if it's necessary. They can't keep Broadway Billy in no sich hole as this an' they want ter know it. I'll show Inspector Br— Hello! what th' doost have I done now?"

Well he might ask. He had pushed out three or four more small stones, and was trying to dislodge a larger one, when suddenly down came half a ton or more of the wall. Feeling it give way, the boy had just time to spring back and escape being crushed.

"Gosh!" he exclaimed, "they'll think I'm a

young Samson, when they see th' way I've been breakin' up housekeepin' round here. Now fer t'other side."

With the utmost caution he made his way through the opening, and then advanced step by step into the darkness beyond.

Presently he ran against a barrel, and in moving around that fell over a keg.

This proved that he was in a cellar under the saloon.

Getting upon his feet again he went on, hoping to find the stairs leading up to the room above. These once discovered, he might make his escape that way.

Presently he stepped right into what seemed to be a narrow passage. He could feel the wall on both sides as he entered, and then his hands came in contact with damp boards.

Wondering what new place he was advancing toward, the boy kept steadily on, knowing that he could return to the cellar if he found no outlet.

When he had gone twenty feet, perhaps, his foot came in contact with some obstruction and, stooping down to feel with his hands to learn what it was, he found it an oval surface of brick. It rose from the ground at an angle, and sloped away as far as he could reach.

Wondering what it could be, and finding that the passage did not seem to end, there, Billy resolved to creep over and continue his investigation.

Acting accordingly, he placed his knees upon the bricks and began to creep up, but a moment later, in putting out his hands they found no support and he lost his balance; and in his efforts to save himself some of the bricks gave way, and down he went.

CHAPTER X.

A TIMELY RESCUE.

"SWEET pertaters!"

These were the first words Billy uttered, as he picked himself up, but they were quickly followed by others.

"If this don't jest take th' bakery, then kick me!" he added. "Where have I got to now, I wonder? Reckon I'm worse off now than I was in th' first place. I'm lower down, that's certain. Wish some one would 'lower down' a rope and yank me out. Ring th' bell! About another fall, and I won't know my name. It's queer to me how I ever kem ter git inter sich a mess, anyhow. Hereafter I'll tend strictly to my own biz—if I don't fergit, and then mebbly I'll be able ter keep out o' danger. Here I am now, away down in the lower regions somewhere, and no way ter git out. Wish now I had that match I wasted; I'd like ter look round. Bein' as I can't look though, I'll have ter feel. Here goes!"

It must be confessed that Billy was now not a little frightened. Nor is it to be wondered at. It was enough to try the nerves of the bravest.

Feeling around, he soon discovered the truth—that he was in a sewer.

"Well, if this don't git the bulge on any adventure I ever had afore!" he exclaimed. "I've been knocked around quite a little, but this night's work jest tops th' pile. If there's any more to come, I don't know but I'll have ter give up. Seems ter me this is rubbin' it on a little too thick. I'm gittin' more'n I bargained for—too much of a good thing, as it were. Now I wonder if I kin git out th' way I got in?"

He soon found that he could not. He could not reach the top of the sewer, and even after piling up the bricks which had fallen in with him, they did not raise him high enough to enable him to get a firm hold.

"No, sir, it can't be did," he finally concluded; "and sich bein' th' case, what is ter be done? No use stayin' right here, that's sure. No one here is goin' ter help me out, and if any one did it might be th' murderers that throwed me in, and then they'd finish me for sure. Can't git out alone, and daresn't holler for help; consequently I'll have ter mosey on and trust to chances."

Coming to this conclusion, Billy started off, using the utmost care to avoid coming to any further grief.

For some time he plodded on, hoping to find some place where light could be seen, but he looked for such a place in vain.

Once or twice when he came to a place where the noise of the street reached him, he called for help, but he called in vain, and after waiting for an answer he would start off again.

By-and-by he came to a place where another sewer intersected the one he was in, and there did not know which way to go. Up one of the sewers a current of air was passing, and think-

ing that indicated an opening, he resolved to go that way, and started on.

He noticed, too, that the water in the sewer was running in that direction, and reasoned soundly enough that it must be flowing to some outlet.

"S'pose there is fellers that would jest enjoy this sort of excursion," he muttered, "but I ain't of 'em, not by a jug full! It don't suit me, for sour apples! Wonder if I'll git out alive? Serve me right if I didn't. When I think of poor George Whatever-they-call-him I feel sick. Strikes me I'm responsible fer his death, if he's been killed, and no doubt he has. I'm afraid Inspector Br— Hello! this water is gettin' deeper!"

True enough. Where it had been only to the boy's shoe-tops a moment before, it was now half-way to his knees. And every moment it continued to grow deeper.

"Must be comin' out some place or other, sure," Billy mused. "Git's deeper and deeper. Reckon I'll have ter swim fer it if it keeps on. Hello! clear to my knees! Be a fine mess if it gits clear to th' top, won't it? Reckon I'd have ter turn back. S'pose I'm gettin' close to th' river, and—"

"Chugg!"

Billy's last step found no bottom, and into the river he plunged. He was out at last!

Being a good swimmer, the boy came to the surface in a moment, and then struck out. The next moment he came in contact with a spile, and then with another and another, proving that he was under a pier.

On he swam, hoping soon to see a light in some direction, and presently he did.

Making his way toward that point, swimming slowly and reserving all his strength, not knowing how long he would have to remain in the water before he could find a place to get out, he was just gaining the open water when he heard voices.

Stopping to listen, he next heard the tread of heavy feet overhead, and a moment later came a loud splash in the water. The next moment the steps were heard again, and were soon lost in the distance.

Billy's hair fairly stood on end, but he had no time to speculate, for the next moment the body of a man rose to the surface directly in front of him.

The boy's first impulse was to draw back, but ere it was too late the thought came to him that perhaps this was the very George Stidwell he had heard Sharkey and Burke plan to kill, and reaching out he grasped the man by the hair just as he was sinking again.

One of the piles of the pier was right at hand, and throwing his arm around that, Billy was fortunate enough to grasp a large spile, and to that he clung, holding his man just high enough to keep his face above the surface.

He soon found though that the hair did not long afford a good hold, so letting go he caught hold of the man's collar instead, and then taking a decided grip on the spile, had time to think.

"Well, this is th' most wonderful string o' solid events I ever found. Wonder who this feller is? Sweet pertaters! wouldn't it be a lucky go if it is Miss Warrenson's George? Ye kin bet solid that I'm goin' ter keep hold of him, anyhow. I'll cling ter this old spile till my arm pulls out."

Five minutes passed, and by that time Billy's arm began to ache. He saw that a change of some kind would have to be made soon, or his hand would lose its strength.

He was just on the point of calling for help when he felt the man move.

"Say," he directed, "if you're comin' to ye want ter hold still. I'm yer friend and I'm tryin' ter save ye."

"Where am I?" the man gasped.

"Ye're in th' river. Don't move now, or I'll let ye sink. Say, is your name George Stidwell?"

"Yes, it is. Who are you?"

"Oh! I'm only a boy. You was pitched into th' river here, and I managed ter git hold of ye. Say, got any arms or legs broke?"

"No, but my head is hurt. Keep hold of me for heaven's sake, I cannot swim."

"Worse and worse!" Billy cried. "I was jest goin' ter ax ye if ye could. Well, somethin' has got ter be done, sure. You jest grab holdt around me, so's I kin use both hands ter grip this spile. There, that's better, now I kin hold on a little longer."

George Stidwell, although he could not swim, possessed rare presence of mind, and knowing that his life depended on this boy, he did as he was directed.

His head pained so that he could hardly col-

lect his thoughts and retain them, and he felt that there was danger of his becoming unconscious again. He had little or no strength, and was entirely helpless.

"My boy," he gasped, "save my life and you shall be rewarded. Keep hold of me until I get a little strength."

"Oh! I'll keep ye, never fear. You jest hold ter me and I'll hold to th' spile. I'll holler fer help in a minute more."

"Why do you not do so now?"

"What! and fetch them murderers back to finish us? Oh! no, not for Joseph!"

"Well, hold fast. My life depends on you. You shall be richly rewarded for this great service. My head swims. I cannot see. I—"

"Sweet pertaters! there he goes again."

Billy felt the man's arms relax, and making a quick grab at him, caught him just as the tide was carrying him away.

Then the man hung limp and lifeless as at first.

Keeping his head out of water, Billy drew him close to the spile, and then getting the best hold he could to relieve the terrible strain upon his arm, he began to call loudly for help. It could not be put off any longer.

Again and again he called, but no answer came. The space under the pier seemed to swallow his voice and not allow it to go beyond its dark confines.

The boy began to despair. His arm was fast becoming numb, and losing its strength, and he knew that he could not hold on much longer.

Still he was resolved to hold out till the last moment. He would either save George Stidwell or he would die with him. He meant to retain his hold while his senses remained.

"Help! help!" he called, every moment, and at last there came a welcome response.

Billy turned in the direction whence the answer came, and beheld a bright light dancing on the water a short distance away.

"Help!" he called again.

"Hold on!" came the reply, "we're coming."

A moment later one of the boats of the harbor police came up, a policeman in the bow flashing his lantern all around to discover who it was had called.

"Here, this way," Billy gasped, "and be quick! I can't hold on much longer."

"Hold fast, my boy, hold fast," the officer cried, now catching sight of Billy; "we'll have you in a minute."

The next moment the boat ran in under the pier, and strong hands pulled Billy and his senseless burden in.

Help had come not a moment too soon, for Billy sunk down completely exhausted.

"Who is this man?" the policemen asked, "and how came he in the river?"

"Threwed in," Billy gasped in reply. "His name is George Stidwell, and he belongs at th' Astor House. He—he—" But he got no further. Weak as he was from his recent accident, his strength failed him and he fainted.

"What's to be done with 'em?" one of the officers queried.

"Why," said another, the captain, "we'll take this man to th' Astor House and th' boy to th' hospital. If th' man belongs there he'll get good care, and we don't know where the boy belongs."

"He's a brave little fellow, anyhow."

"Ye're right."

"This man looks like a man of rocks, to judge by his face and clothes. I'll bet there's a big mystery back of this."

"Yes, you're right. We'll pump this boy tomorrow and find out what he knows, and then we'll work th' case up."

Twenty minutes later, George Stidwell, just returning to consciousness, was carried to his room in the Astor, while Broadway Billy, still insensible, was taken to the nearest hospital, and both received immediate medical care.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRST DEFEAT.

WHEN Justin Blakesland arose next morning at his usual hour, the same satanic smile appeared upon his face again.

"By this time," he chuckled, "my worthy cousin is no doubt food for fishes. I have no doubt Sharkey has done the job, for ten thousand dollars is big pay. It is nothing to me, though, for now I shall soon have ten times ten, and ten times that again. Ha, ha, ha! No more living upon allowance for me!"

When he went down he went at once to his uncle's room.

"Dear uncle," he asked most concernedly, "how are you this morning?"

Broadway Billy, the Bootblack Bravo.

"Worse, my boy, worse," was the faint reply.

"Heavens! do not tell me so."

"It is true. I feel that I am fast sinking. Have you heard from George again? When will he be here?"

"I have not heard from him, but no doubt he will be here on the first train out—about nine o'clock."

"Is there no earlier train?"

"No, that is the first."

"Then I fear I shall not live to see him."

"Heavens! you do not think so? I must send at once for Dr. Pindar."

"No use, my boy, no use. He can do no more. He will be here soon, though."

"Then I must telegraph to the city for other aid. You shall not depend on Pindar alone. He may be mistaken. You shall have the benefit of a consultation, and that at once!"

"No, no, I forbid it. Leave all to Pindar."

"But, uncle, it—"

"Please do as I request, my boy. Wait till we learn what Pindar thinks, at least."

"Well, I will wait uncle. I do not promise how long, though. You shall not die without every effort to save you."

"Well, well, see what Pindar thinks, and then do as you please."

As he was leaving the room the rascal met the nurse, and closing the door behind him so that his uncle might not hear, asked:

"What do you think of Mr. Stidwell's condition?"

"He is worse, sir."

"So I feared. Have you given his medicine regularly during the night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think he will recover?"

"I fear not, sir. He is very low."

"Too bad, too bad. Well, I will wait till Pindar comes, and then I shall send to the city for other physicians. I am afraid Pindar does not fully understand the case."

"I know he does not," the nurse averred. "I can read it in his face."

"Just as I feared. He shall not have full charge any longer. I love my uncle too well not to do all I can to save him."

The wily rascal knew what he was about. If any suspicion happened to fall upon him, such remarks as these would go a long way toward proving him guiltless.

Passing on, he entered the breakfast-room and sat down, and when a servant entered, asked:

"Has your master's son arrived yet?"

"No, sir," was the reply.

"So I supposed. No doubt he will come in the nine o'clock train. When he arrives, I desire to see him at once."

"Yes, sir."

The servant then set about serving the breakfast, while Justin Blakesland up the morning paper to glance over its columns.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet—so suddenly that he overturned his chair, and exclaimed:

"Thunder and furies!"

The startled servant let fall a plate, and stood staring at him in amazement.

"W-what is it, sir?" he gasped.

This inquiry recalled Blakesland to the fact that he was not alone, and he saw that an explanation of his action must be made at once. He decided his course instantly.

"Here, in the paper," he answered. "Mr. George Stidwell's life has been attempted by some dastardly cur. I must hasten to the city at once. Don't let your master hear a word of this. Come! my breakfast—quick!"

As much surprised, in truth, as the villain pretended to be, the servant made haste, while Justin finished reading the article that had caused him such a start.

It ran as follows:

A TIMELY RESCUE.

"Mr. George Stidwell, son of the well-known Franklin Stidwell, had a narrow escape from death last night. He arrived in the city at a late hour from Washington, and went to the Astor House. A few minutes after his arrival he received a note, requesting him to meet the writer at once on one of the East River piers, and so ingeniously was the note worded that the young man obeyed the summons. Arriving at the pier he was engaged in conversation by a stranger, who held his attention while another man crept up behind and dealt him a blow on the head. When Mr. Stidwell came to he found himself in the river, a boy holding him to keep him from drowning until help came. A few moments later the young man became unconscious again, and knew no more until he found himself in the hotel.

The rest is told by the river police. They were attracted by cries for help, and rowing to the point whence the cries came, found a boy clinging to a

spile under Pier No. —, and holding fast to an unconscious man. The boy was about exhausted, and fainted soon after his rescue. Had the police arrived one minute later, it is believed they would have been too late. The boy was taken at once to a hospital.

"Who Mr. Stidwell's assailants were is not known, and the whole affair is a mystery. The evening papers, no doubt, will give a full account."

As Justin Blakesland read, he gnashed his teeth in silent rage. Who could that boy be? No doubt he had witnessed the attempted murder, and slipping into the water had escaped the eyes of the two hirelings and saved the victim. If this were the case, if the boy knew who the two men were, he was in danger. If Sharkey and Burke were arrested, they might confess the whole scheme—as far as they knew it. He must see Sharkey as soon as possible.

Eating a hasty breakfast he repaired again to his uncle's room, where he found Dr. Pindar.

The doctor's face was more clouded than ever, and the moment Justin entered he rose and said:

"Mr. Blakesland, may I see you in private for a moment?"

"Certainly, sir. Please step into the parlor with me."

The two left the sick-room and entered the parlor.

"Have you seen the paper this morning?" Dr. Pindar asked.

"Yes," Justin answered, adding: "I hope you have not let it be known to uncle."

"Just what I wanted to caution you about, sir. He must not know it. I see you are thoughtful."

"Yes, doctor, I am thoughtful and I am in despair. I fear my uncle is worse."

"He certainly is, and I desire you to send at once for Dr. Hamlin, of New York. Here is his address. Request him to come immediately."

"I will do so. I will telegraph to him at once, and then I am going down to bring George home. Poor George! I wonder who his enemy can be? By the way, if uncle inquires for him, as he will, please say he missed a train—anything to keep his spirits up. I shall return as soon as possible."

"Very well, I will do so."

They parted then, and Justin Blakesland went up to his room to prepare for his trip to the metropolis.

"It works, it works," he chuckled. "Two or three days more and the old man will be dead, and then as soon as I can put the son out of my path I shall be sure of my game. Ha, ha, ha! I am too much for them, and no one will ever suspect."

While the villain was thus exulting over the progress of his evil designs, Dr. Pindar was with his patient.

"Strange, strange," he muttered, "and I do not understand it. I never saw such a complication in this ailment before. My last medicine seems only to have aggravated it, and I will give no more of it. I will give only a simple tonic pending the arrival of Hamlin, and then I will consult with him."

And thus was the poor invalid given a few hours' respite from the deadly poison.

Having made his preparations, the villain descended the stairs and called a servant, and after once more cautioning him to keep the newspaper item from Mr. Stidwell's knowledge, set out for the station to send his telegram.

An hour and a quarter later he was in New York.

Taking a cab at the ferry he went—not to the Astor House, but to the corner of a street not far from O'Sullivan's saloon, and there getting out, went on to the saloon on foot, having dismissed the cab.

He was just in time to find Sharkey Dan there.

"Come inter th' back room," Sharkey said, "and we'll talk this heap thing over."

"Well, lead on. A fine mess you've made of it."

"No fault o' ours."

"No, I should say not."

Going into the little room at the rear of the saloon, the pair sat down.

"Now," demanded Blakesland, "let me hear what you have to say for yourself. Didn't I make a fair bargain with you, and give you your own price?"

"Yes, so ye did, and I carried out my part of it. If it hadn't been fer that dasted boy, th' job would 'a' been all hunk."

"Who was the boy?"

"An infernal spy! D'ye remember that little feller who was blackin' yer boots when I met ye t'other afternoon?"

"No, I don't. I remember I was having them blacked, but I do not think I looked at the boy at all. But, go on."

"Well, if ye remember, ye spoke about th' case then, and I told ye I was ter meet Burke here that night."

"Yes, I remember that."

"Well, when Burke and me was a-plannin' heur last night, that same boy jumped up from ahind them bar's there and made a break fer th' door. He'd come here ter spy on us."

"Furies! and he escaped?"

"Not much he didn't. Th' door happined ter be hooked, and we grabbed him. He tried ter give us a stand-off, but I reckernized him, and Burke and me jest opened that trap there under th' table and pitched him down."

"And he got out?"

"He did, fer a fact. Soon's I see'd th' paper this mornin' it struck me queer that a boy could be on hand at th' pier at that hour, and I kem here and looked down inter th' hole, and dast me if th' young rat hadn't pulled down half th' wall. Don't see how he did it, but he did. Seein' that, I went down cellar and looked around."

"Well?"

"Thar's one of two things certain—he either fell inter th' sewer an got out, or he went up th' cellar stairs and escaped through th' saloon. Then he's took our tracks and follered us again."

"And where is he now?"

"In th' hoss-pittle."

"Sharkey, that boy must die!"

"I know that as well as you do. I've sent Burke ter lay fer him, and this night he'll be fixed so that he'll tell no more tales, you bet."

"And the other job must be done over again, too. Of course you want to collar that ten thousand?"

"Bet yer life! I figgered high on that. I've paid Burke th' hull thousand ye gave me, and now I haven't a red. Can't you pony up a little on account?"

"Well, here's a hundred. Keep shady for a few days now, and as soon as I get a plan laid I'll come and see you."

And so they parted, Blakesland going at once to the Astor House, little dreaming that he was shadowed.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE TRACK.

"SWEET pertaters! where be I now? and what new diffikilty have I got inter?"

It was morning. Broadway Billy's faint had terminated in a long sleep, and he awoke to find himself in a hospital.

He was feeling as well as ever, and sat up and looked around.

"Seems like I'm in a lank in a horse-pistol—or I should say hoss-pittle," he meditated.

"Let's see—where did I leave off? Somewheres 'bout th' third chapter, I guess, where th' police had jest kem to th' rescue. 'Yes, that's so. They'd jest pulled me into th' boat, and that's all I know 'bout it. Wonder where George is? Let's see—didn't I tell 'em ter take him to th' Astor? 'Pears like I did, and no doubt that's where he is. As fer th' others—well I ain't done with this thing yet. They've tried murder once, and no doubt they'll try it again; and I must put Stidwell up to th' racket. I'm goin' inter this thing now fer all I'm worth, and if I don't make a rattlin' 'mrngst th' dry bones, it'll be 'cause I can't spell 'able'."

Looking about him, Billy found that he was not the only occupant of the ward. There were a great many beds, and a third of them were occupied.

Seeing the boy sitting up, a nurse came toward him.

"What is it, my lad?" he asked.

"That's jest what I'm tryin' ter make out," Billy replied. "Hang me if I know what it is. Looks like a cross between a ten-cent lodgin'-house and a Broadway hotel. What d'ye call it, anyhow?"

"You are in the — Hospital."

"Oh! this is a horse-pistol, eh? Never was in one afore, so ye'll have ter excuse my eagerness. What am I doin' here, though? Got no broken arms or legs, have I? Don't feel so, anyhow."

"You were pulled out of the river, and brought here between twelve and one o'clock, and you're just waking up."

"Jest wakin' up, am I? Thought I was awake. S'pose you'd order know, though. Say, where's my togs?"

"Your what?"

"My togs—my clothes; coat, pants, vest and so-forth."

"Oh! I understand. They are being dried for you."

"Well, now, see here, mister, I don't like to put you to any trouble, but if you'll have them duds brought up here right away, I'll be more than obliged to ye. I've got ter be goin'."

"Oh, no! you can't go till the doctor says so!"

"Can't go till th' doctor says so! I'd like ter know what's th' reason I can't!"

"Because it's against the rules, and because I will not allow you to go."

"Well, that's a fine how-d'e-do! Say, d'ye see any symptoms o' small-pox 'bout me? Does my appearance indicate yaller fever, or anything of that sort. D'ye see any hoof-marks o' cholera on me? Course ye don't. Then why can't I go? There's nothin' ails me."

"Can't help it, my lad. You'll have to wait till the doctor discharges you."

"Oh! but I can't wait," Billy persisted, slipping out of the bed. "My mother will be goin' inter mournin' fer me if I don't show up soon, and besides that I've got biz to 'tend to. I tell ye I've got ter go. I don't like th' idee of goin' out in this style, but if ye won't bring my clothes I reckon I'll have to."

"No use talking, my lad, you can't go till— Ah! here comes the doctor now."

"That feller him?" Billy asked, indicating a man who had just entered.

"Yes, that's him."

"Say, doc," Billy called out, "I want ter go home. How is it? Think ye kin spare me? I don't like ter leave ye short-handed, but I've got urgent biz to 'tend to, so I hope ye'll excuse me."

Many of the other patients laughed heartily, and the doctor looked at the boy in amazement.

It was an early hour, and the doctor had just arrived to make his morning visit. He did not know who Billy was.

"Well, my boy," he said, "I guess we can spare you, for I venture to say you are not at all ill. How came you here?"

"I was fished out of th' river last night and fetched here, sir."

"Oh! that is all, eh? Well, then, I guess you may go." And after a hasty look at the boy he formally discharged him.

"Now," said Billy to the nurse, "please have my clothes brought in. It don't make a bit o' difference whether they're dry or not, I've got ter mosey right out o' here, double quick. My business is sufferin'."

In a short time he received his clothes, about half-dry, and a short time later emerged from the hospital and set out for home.

Barely had he been gone half an hour when a police detective called to see him, followed by half a dozen news-hungry reporters, and a little later Big Burke came to loaf around and wait for him to come out.

All of these were doomed to disappointment.

When Billy reached home he ate a hearty breakfast, telling his mother of his wonderful night's adventures as he did so, and after breakfast was over he washed and combed, and put on his new clothes.

"These togs will be a bully disguise," he muttered. "Nobody ever see me fit out like this afore, and I bet I could walk right up to Sharkey Dan and he'd never know me. I'll give him a chance ter try it if I kin find him anyhow."

When he was ready to leave the house he said to his mother:

"Say, mom, jest give me two o' them five-dollar pieces, will ye. I may have use fer money. I'm on the war-path now, fer sure. I'm bound ter see this thing out, or bu'st. I tell ye I'm bound ter be a detective, and I can't begin any younger."

His mother gave him the money, and he set out.

"Now," he mused, when he gained the street, "let's see what I'm goin' ter do. It's all very well ter play detective, but it strikes me a detective has ter have some thinkin'-machinery somewheres about him. That's th' one pint I seem to lack. Wonder if I couldn't buy a pint o' brains somewhere? First of all now, I must find that feller Blacklegs—I mean Blakesland, and shadder him. No doubt he'll lead me to where I'll find George Stidwell, and as soon's I find him I'll put a bug in his ear, you bet. S'pose I might go to th' Astor House, but I don't s'pose I'd make much if I did. Or I might go right to Miss Warrenson and tell her th' story, and let her warn George. But that don't suit me. She'd tell th' police, George would hire a regular detective, and I'd be counted out. No sir-ee! I'm in this game, and I'm in to stay. What I want now is ter find th' big villain. How'm I ter do it?"

This caused the boy to scratch his head.

"Say," he presently muttered. "I wonder if there's anything in th' papers 'bout my doin's last night? Guess I'll buy one and see."

And he did, finding the same account we have shown as found by Justin Blakesland.

"Kerrect, as far as it goes," Billy assented, "but it don't go very far. It's a mystery, that's what it is, and I'll bet th' police will be after it red-hot. S'pose they'd like to get hold o' me ter pump me fer facts, but I ain't with 'em. This presimmern is mine, and I'm goin' ter pole it down, you bet. Now let's do a little reasonin'. Here's this little item in th' paper; what does it tell me? Well it says G. S.; which means George Stidwell, is the son of F. S., meanin' his daddy—Franklin Stidwell; and if F. S. is well known I reckon I kin soon find out where he lives. 'Sides that it shows me that G. S. was taken to th' Astor, and no doubt he's there yet. So far so good, and now let's reason some more. This paper has no doubt been seen by Miss Warrenson, and of course she'll go to see her George—post-haste. Likewise it's been seen by th' villain—J. B., and he'll go ter see Sharkey. And he's th' man I want ter find, 'cause I must find out what new tricks they're up to."

"Now, where'll I find him? Where's th' most likely place ter spot him 'bout this hour? Why, I reckon he'll be down round O'Sullivan's. Anyhow, I'll go round that way, and if I don't see anybody I want ter see, then I'll go to th' Astor and lay low there. They'll be takin' G. S. home by 'nd by, I reckon, and then I'll spot him. Yes, that's my programme, sure. Now ring up th' curtain and let th' show begin."

Having decided his course, Billy lost no time in making his way to O'Sullivan's saloon taking care to keep on the opposite side of the street.

Arriving there, he was just in time to see Justin Blakesland get out of a cab at the corner, dismiss it, and then come on to the saloon and enter.

"There he goes, sure 'nuff!" Billy said. "Guess I didn't miss my guess very far. I'd give a dollar ter hear what's said now, fer there's Sharkey, big as life. Hello! they're goin' inter the back room! Wish I could be in there 'hind them barrels— No, hang me if I do, either! I've been there once, and that's enough. I'll jest hang round here and wait."

And so he did. And when Blakesland came out and turned his steps toward the hotel, Broadway Billy was on his track.

"Now, my lord duke," the boy's thoughts ran, "I'm after ye. You're th' heavy villain, George Stidwell is th' hero, and I'm th' detective; and if I don't clip your wings I'll bag my head."

Straight to the Astor House the rascal went, and entered, and Billy took up a convenient position and waited for further developments.

A few minutes later a carriage drew up to the entrance and stopped, and the boy recognized it instantly. It was Mr. Warrenson's equipage, and in it were Miss Warrenson and her companion—or maid.

"Jest what I figgered on," Billy mused, as they alighted and entered; "and now fer th' next scene."

CHAPTER XIII.

CAPTURED AGAIN.

WHEN Justin Blakesland entered the hotel he made haste to inquire for George Stidwell, explainin'g who he was, and was shown at once to his cousin's room.

George was coming around all right, though his head was bandaged and his face was quite pale, and was just eating a light breakfast.

"George, thank God you are safe!" Justin cried, the moment he was admitted, and he crossed the room in haste and caught hold of his cousin's hand. "I saw the account of your mishap in this morning's paper, and hastened here by first train. Thank heaven I find you no worse."

"Thanks, Justin, thanks," George returned. "I am all right, thanks to that brave boy— whoever he is, and I must find and reward him."

"Yes, he certainly must be rewarded, and he shall be."

There was a deep meaning in these words.

"But, how is father?" George hastened to ask.

"Alas! George, he is worse."

"Worse!"

"Yes, and we begin to fear he is nearing the end."

"My God! and I am not at his side! Tell me, what time does the next train start? I must go home at once."

"There is a train in about half an hour, and I will assist you."

"Yes, yes, I must go home on that train."

George was dressed and sitting up, having sent out at an early hour and procured an outfit of clothing complete, and of course could be ready in a short time.

Just then came a knock at the door.

"Please see who it is," George requested.

Blakesland opened the door, and to his surprise came face to face with Miss Warrenson and her maid.

"You, here?" he ejaculated.

"Yes; how is Mr. Stidwell? May we come in?"

The two girls entered, and Winnie threw herself into George's arms, exclaiming:

"Thank heaven, George, you were not killed! Who can your enemy be?"

Justin Blakesland looked on in amazement. He was not aware, as we have said, that George and Winnie were engaged to be married.

"Who my enemy is, Winnie, I cannot imagine. But, we will talk of that at another time. Look at Justin! he is the picture of surprise. Justin, allow me to ask you to congratulate me. Miss Warrenson is my affianced bride."

The cousin's face was pale, but he responded firmly:

"George, I do congratulate you. When we fail to win a prize ourselves, it is pleasing to see it won by a friend. Had I known this yesterday, Miss Warrenson," turning to Winnie, "believe me I would never have spoken. Pray forgive me."

"Freely and fully, sir," and the young girl gave him her hand frankly.

"And you, too, George. Yesterday, knowing nothing of this, I asked Miss Warrenson to become mine. If it were any other man than you, I believe I would hate him; as it is—accept my congratulations as freely as they are freely given."

"Thank you, Justin. There is nothing to be forgiven."

The rascal knew what he was about. He wanted to retain George Stidwell's confidence and esteem, and at the same time win the regard of Winnie Warrenson, in order that when his evil designs were carried out, the road to her heart and hand would be the easier.

"Are you going out home this morning, George?" Winnie asked.

"Yes, I shall start at once. Father is worse, and Justin has come to help me home."

"Oh! that is sad news. Still, I hope there may be a change for the better by the time you reach home."

"Yes, I hope so, but from what Justin says I fear it is hoping against hope. I fear the worst."

"Too bad. You must telegraph to me as soon as you reach home and let me know."

"I will do so."

Miss Warrenson made her call a very short one, and in a few minutes she and her maid again entered their carriage.

"Kind of a short visit," Broadway Billy remarked, as he watched them depart. "Should naturally think it would be, though, with that murderer of a Blakesland present."

A short time later and George Stidwell appeared, leaning upon Blakesland's shoulder, having found himself weaker than he had supposed, owing to the awful blow he had received at the hands of Big Burke; and the two entered a cab.

"Sweet pertaters!" Billy had to exclaim, "if that feller ain't playin' it well! He's makin' George believe he's th' best friend he's got, when in fact he's his worst enemy. It's queer how blind folks is sometimes. Never mind, though, I've got my eyes on th' villain, and if I don't make him weep salt sad tears, call my name Pat. I'm in dead earnest now, every time. Miss Warrenson has done th' square thing by me fer th' little service I did fer her, and I'm goin' ter bring her lover out right side up with care or bu'st."

The cab started off, and Billy had to move lively to keep it in sight; but he was determined not to lose sight of it at any cost, and so followed it to the Barclay street ferry.

There the two men got out and entered the ferry.

"I'm with ye, every time!" Billy muttered as he followed. And when they went upon the boat he was "with" them still. Nor did they leave him behind when they boarded a train on the Jersey side.

The train soon started, and presently the conductor came through.

"Ticket!" he said, holding out his hand to Billy.

"Ain't got any," said Billy.

"Well, pay your fare then."

"Say," Billy inquired, "where does this train go to, anyhow?"

"It goes to M——," was the reply. "Where do you want to go to?"

"Behanged if I know," Billy admitted, laughing. "Ye see I'm havin' a vacation, and I jest got aboard fer th' fun of th' ride. I'll pay to M——, anyhow. How much is it?"

The conductor named the price and Billy paid it.

"Now I'm all hunk," the boy mused. "I kin go as far as th' train goes, and it ain't likely th' others will go any further. If they do, I'll be there, they kin bet on that."

At every stop the train made, the young sleuth kept close watch of the two men to see if they intended getting out, holding himself ready to follow if they did, and at last when the brakeman called out "B——," he saw them get up.

"Here we be, then?" he said. "Well, I was never so far in th' country afore, but I reckon I kin hold my own. I'll have ter try it, anyhow."

When the train came to a stop the two men got out, and so did Billy, of course. And there was also an elderly gentleman who alighted from another car.

This gentleman stepped up to one of the station employees, and was heard to ask:

"Can you direct me to the residence of Mr. Franklin Stidwell?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "that big house right over there."

George Stidwell and Justin Blakesland heard the question, and both turned to see who it was asking. Broadway Billy, too, was all attention, and standing back out of the way watched to see what would be the outcome.

The old gentleman thanked the station man for the information, and was about to turn away when Justin Blakesland stepped forward and said:

"Pardon me, sir, but are you inquiring for Mr. Stidwell's place?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Are you Doctor Hammlin, of New York?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, sir, the carriage is waiting for you. I am Mr. Stidwell's nephew, and this gentleman is his son. Please to come with us." And all three passed around the station and entered a carriage, which started off at once at a rapid gait.

"So much fer so much," said Billy. "I'll foller on behind, bein' as I know where th' house is, and take my time about it. I've got ter do some fine work now, you bet. I've got to see G. S., and I've got ter keep clear of J. B.; and twixt th' two jobs they'll be plenty to do. Wonder how this thing'll come out? Wonder who th' old stranger is? Called him a doctor somebody, I believe. 'Cordin' to that there must be somebody sick in th' house. Wonder who that is. Reckon I'll have ter find out if I kin. I'm on th' rampage fer information now, and I sha'n't rest easy till I git th' hull story."

Billy set out in the direction the carriage had gone, walking leisurely, and in due time reached his destination.

The Stidwell residence was a large, old-fashioned house, some distance back from the street, and was surrounded by many fine old oaks. In front was a beautiful lawn, and dense old hedges stood in lieu of fences.

We may mention here that the railroad passed through B—— on the southern limits of the town; and south of the railroad, where the Stidwell residence stood, the houses were nearly all large and far apart.

Billy walked on past the house, and came next to a small field. Here was a neat wire fence, and a space between the hedge and the first post of the fence tempted the boy to squeeze through.

Once in the field, he passed along the hedge toward the rear of the house.

He had no definite plan of action laid, but thought he would look around a little while he racked his brain for an idea.

When he came to the end of the hedge he found that the same field extended in the rear of the house, and on that side a picket fence separated it from a well-kept garden, in which were many vines and fruit trees.

Here, too, it was possible to squeeze in between the end of the fence and the hedge, and the boy was just on the point of doing so, when a hand fell heavily upon his shoulder and he was pulled back.

Startled, and not a little frightened, too, perhaps, Billy tried to jerk away, but he could not do so; and while making the attempt he turned to see who it was had hold of him, and to his dismay found that he was in the hands of his enemy, Sharkey Dan.

CHAPTER XIV. COUNTERPLOTING.

MEANWHILE George Stidwell, Justin Blakesland and Doctor Hammlin had arrived and entered the house, and gone at once to Mr. Stidwell's room, which by the way was on the ground floor.

Doctor Pindar was there.

George, whose strength was fast returning, sprung forward to his father's side at once.

"Father," he cried, "I am here."

"Bless you, my son, I know you would come," the sick man responded feebly, as he clasped George's hand. "But you are late, are you not? And what has happened? Why is your head bandaged?"

"Only a slight accident, father. It is of no moment. Yes, I am late, I missed the early train. But, how are you?"

"I am no better, George; no better."

"Nor is he any worse," Doctor Pindar here interposed. "He is, in fact, a little better than he was early this morning."

"Thank Heaven!" George exclaimed, earnestly. "I hope the change for the better is at hand, and that the danger is past."

Mr. Stidwell shook his head despondingly.

Doctor Pindar and Doctor Hammlin had at once greeted each other, and now drew apart from the others to consult.

The two doctors had held a long and earnest consultation, and when George and Justin left the room they locked the doors and then turned to the sick man.

Doctor Hammlin felt his pulse, looked at his tongue, and then with a small microscope examined his eye, requesting the patient to look direct at the lens.

For some moments he watched closely through the microscope, and then turning to Doctor Pindar, said:

"My suspicion is confirmed."

"What is it?" Doctor Pindar asked.

"That there is no hope?" the patient queried.

"No, sir," replied Doctor Hammlin, answering Mr. Stidwell first; "on the contrary, sir, there is every hope."

While speaking these words, the old doctor had been penciling a word upon a card, and that card he passed to Doctor Pindar.

On it was the one word—"Poison."

Doctor Pindar stepped back, his face as pale as the linen of the bed.

Doctor Hammlin motioned him to say nothing, and the two retired to the end of the room.

"Doctor Pindar," said the elder doctor then, "have you ever been in India?"

"No, sir, I never have."

"Then I have the advantage of you. I once spent four years in that land."

"And this poison—"

"Is one of the most subtle and deadly of all poisons. It is known in India, and but little known elsewhere. It can be used in two ways. It can be given in quantity sufficient to produce instant death, or it can be given, as in this case, so that death will creep upon the victim so slowly that poison cannot be suspected. Fortunately I have experimented with the drug, and know its action."

"And the antidote?"

"There is none."

"Good heavens! how, then, can you say there is hope?"

"Because there is hope. If no more of the poison is taken, Mr. Stidwell will recover."

"What, then, is to be done?"

"Do you suspect any one in this house, now that you have learned the truth?"

"No, I do not."

"Then we must learn who the guilty one is. First of all, though, we must have proof. Have you any of the medicines left which Mr. Stidwell has been taking?"

"No, I have not. I threw them all away this morning."

"That is bad. We must lay another trap, then, and get the proofs positive of my suspicion."

"Then it is only a suspicion after all?"

"No, it is certainty; but, how can I prove it? If I cannot prove it, it will be called a suspicion. No, we must give the poisoner another chance."

"But, is it not taking a great risk? Is there not danger that Mr. Stidwell will receive more of the poison? But, good heavens! it cannot be possible! You must be mistaken."

"No, I am not mistaken. It is an absolute certainty. But, as I said, I must prove what I assert. And how am I to do it? None of the medicines remain, and hence it is necessary to tempt the poisoner again. I have a plan in which there is no danger."

"And what is your plan?"

"Well, pay attention. First of all, we must not let it be known that we suspect the truth. You readily see the necessity of this?"

"Yes; go on."

"Next, we must take no steps that will cause the poisoner to suspect that we suspect."

"Yes; go on."

"In order to do this we must take no unusual precautions."

"But, doctor, to do that it will be necessary to continue giving medicine, and since you are positive of what you claim, who can say when the poison will be given again? Some one must be on guard. Can you give your whole time to the case, to-day and to-night?"

"Yes; I have an assistant, and can do so. Mr. Stidwell and I are warm friends, and I will do anything in my power to save him."

"Then, sir, the plan is easy and the result certain. You have treated the ailment all right, and if it had not been for the poison, the patient would now be well. All that remains to be done is to stop the poison, and his life is his. It is now drawing near to twelve o'clock. I will remain here while you go and get your dinner. We must pretend that Mr. Stidwell's condition is most critical. When you return you must not leave this room again before six o'clock, not for one single moment, and during that time you will give the patient whatever medicine we may agree upon. At six o'clock you will give a little powder which I will prepare, and which will cause the patient to sleep fourteen or sixteen hours. As soon as he falls asleep you will declare him better. Then change the medicine, and leave instructions that it is to be given when the patient awakes, but on no account must he be awakened to give it. Leave positive instructions that he must not be disturbed, and mention that he may sleep a long time—the longer the better. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir."

"Very well. Leave the medicine, with instructions how to give it in case the patient wakes. Then, if it is possible, it will be well for you to remain in the house all night, instructing the servants or the nurse to call you at six o'clock. This will give you two or four hours grace, in case the effects of the drug are not as lasting as I think they will be. When you are called, your first care must be to secure the bottle of medicine, putting another of the same kind in its place. I will come out on the first train from the city, and then will test for the poison. If I find it in the medicine, then it will be easy for a detective to do the rest. Do you agree with me?"

"Perfectly, sir, perfectly."

At that moment came a knock at the door.

Dr. Pindar opened it at once, and George Stidwell and Justin Blakesland entered.

"Is your consultation at an end, gentlemen?" George inquired.

"It is," the two physicians replied.

"And your opinion?" asked Justin.

"There is much hope," answered Dr. Hammlin, speaking out aloud. At the same time, though, he stepped out into the hall, with a motion for the others to follow.

Once out of the room, he added:

"I said there is hope, gentlemen, in order to keep Mr. Stidwell in good spirit. In truth there is very little hope. There is a strange complication which neither Dr. Pindar nor I can understand. There will no doubt be a change this evening, and we hope it will be for the better."

"We trust it may," said Justin, sorrowfully, while George bowed his head and wept.

"Are you going now, Dr. Hammlin?" asked Justin.

"No, not for an hour or so, sir. I desire to watch the effect of a certain medicine we have administered. When Dr. Pindar comes in again I shall be ready to go."

"And you will call again?" asked George.

"Yes, to-morrow."

Dinner being announced, the two physicians were pressed to dine, and both accepted the invitation; but Dr. Hammlin would not go to the table until he had first watched the effect of the mythical drug that had been mythically given.

After Dr. Pindar returned to the sick-room, though, he went to dinner, and after dinner returned to the city, leaving Pindar in charge.

Later in the day Hamilton Warrenson and his daughter arrived. George having telegraphed his father's condition as he had promised to do, and Mr. Warrenson and Winnie accepted an invitation to remain all night.

Up to six o'clock Dr. Pindar held out but little hope, but after that hour Mr. Stidwell fell into a sound sleep, and the doctor's face brightened. There was, he said, a change for the better.

He, too, prepared to remain all night.

CHAPTER XV.

A MAN WITH A GUN.

WHEN Broadway Billy found himself in the hands of Sharkey Dan, his heart—as the saying is—jumped up into his throat.

He was quick to think, however, and instantly decided what to do. He would make the rascal believe he had made a mistake, if he could.

"Ah! my fine feller, I've got ye, have I?" Sharkey exclaimed.

"Pears like ye have," Billy replied, "and ye'd better let me go ag'in', too."

"I had, eh?"

"Yes, ye had."

"Don't you be so lively with yer tongue, my little rooster. Set down here, now, till I have a talk with you."

Sitting down himself, he forced Billy to do the same.

"Now look here, youngster," he said. "I want ter know what it is brings ye out here. Did ye foller me?"

"Foller you?" Billy exclaimed, "why, a yaller dog with no tail wouldn't foller you."

Sharkey's face grew dark.

"Ye'd best be careful," he hissed, "or I'll fix ye like I did last night, only a good deal worse. I won't leave ye any chance ter git away ag'in'."

"What are ye talkin' 'bout?" Billy queried, pretending surprise.

"Oh! ye needn't think I don't know ye, ye little rascal, fer I do."

"Well, that's more'n I kin say fer you, then. What's more, I don't want ter know ye very bad. All I want is fer you to let me go. Mebbe don't know who I am."

"No, but mebbly I do. Now there's no use yer tryin' ter stand me off, youngster, for I know yer face, even if ye have got new togs on. Now jest tell me how ye got outen that fix last night, and how ye got it inter yer head ter come out here."

"You're barkin' round th' wrong stump, mister, sure's ye live. You must take me for somebody else."

Sharkey's face indicated that there was a doubt in his mind.

"Well," he said, "if you hain't th' feller I mean ye'r his twin brother, that I'll vow."

"Then ye'd lose yer vow, sure. There's no twin 'bout me."

"Where do you live?"

"Now, mister, see here, I'm one of th' open-heartedest fellers ye ever see, but you're a stranger ter me. I don't allus like ter trust strangers at first blush. Low me ter ask who you be."

"Me? my name's Jones, and I'm from New York."

"That so? I've often heard tell o' York. Reckon it must be a big place. When did ye come from there?"

"Kem up this mornin'."

"Oh! ye did, eh? And who did ye take me fer?"

"I'll tell ye, sonny, in short meter; I took ye ter be a lad what fell inter a deep hole last night."

"Well, ye're off yer kerbase, then, fer sure. When ye ketch this chicken fallin' inter a deep hole, jest let me know, will ye?"

"I may be mistaken, but hang me if you kin make me believe it, and that's flat."

"That's your own fault then, not mine."

"Well, who d'ye claim ter be then? and where d'ye live?"

"My name's Smith, and I live 'bout several miles from here, more or less; perhaps a little more."

"It's no use, youngster, it won't go down. You're a reg'lar New York gamin'. You kin deny it all ye want to, but ye can't change my mind on that. Ye might fool me if I hadn't got a good square look at yer face last night, and that settles it."

"Oh! well, have it yer own way if ye want to. It don't make no diff."

"Now look here, boy, I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll give me your name, straight, I'll give ye mine. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes, it is, pervided ye give me yours first."

"Well, I'll do that. My name is Daniel Bingham."

"All right. I'll take yer word fer it. My name is William Weston."

"Well, like you, I'll have ter take yer word. Now, why can't ye own up that you're from New York?"

"Couldn't think of it! 'Sides, didn't you say somethin' 'bout tryin' to fix that feller last night—th' feller ye take me ter be?"

"Yes, and so I did. I'm givin' it to ye

straight, now. I don't blame ye fer not ownin' up who ye are, but I know ye all the same. Things is changed since last night, though, and now I'd sooner be yer friend than do ye harm."

"Oh! would ye?"

"Yes, I would. D'ye know what brought me up here?"

"Biz, I reckon."

"Yes, business. I'm goin' back on one feller, and I'm goin' ter take sides with th' other one. D'ye understand?"

"No, sir, I don't. I know what ye say, but hang me if I know what ye're talkin' 'bout."

"Oh! you make me tired! Why don't ye own up who ye be, so's we kin talk right out point blank?"

"Why, I thought you felt so certain who I am. Guess you ain't quite as certain as ye was, be ye?"

"Yes, I'm just as certain as I was, and I'll prove it to ye. Let me tell ye a little story:

"Once on a time there was a rich man had a son and a nephew. Th' nephew he wanted th' son out of th' way. He went to th' city and hired a man to do th' job. One day this nephew and his hired man met on th' street and passed a few words about th' case. A boy overheard. That night th' nephew's hired man and another man met in a saloon. That boy was found there spyin' on 'em. They throwed him into a big hole under th' floor. Th' boy got out. That same night th' two hired men threw th' rich man's son inter th' river. That boy was watchin', and got in and saved th' son's life. Next mornin' it was in th' papers, but it was all a mystery. Th' nephew went to th' city at once to see his hired man. He met him at th' same saloon. They couldn't agree, and th' hired man made up his mind ter sell out and go in on t'other side. When th' nephew left th' saloon he follered him, ter know where he lived, and—Well, he follered him clear home."

"Yes," said Billy, taking the morning paper from his pocket, "seems ter me I seen somethin' like that in th' paper. Yes, here it is."

"Yes," the villain acknowledged, "that's it."

"Well, what happened next? Finish yer story."

Sharkey began to get angry.

"Finish th' story, eh?" he snarled, determined to bring matters to a focus. "Well, I will. You're th' boy that played th' spy, and ye're playin' it now; and I'm one of th' men that tried to put ye out of th' way. Now what have ye got ter say fer yerself?"

"It's all news to me," Billy declared, with face as sober as the face of a judge.

"Boy," Sharkey hissed, "you've got ter die! I kin swear you've got ter die anyhow. I've laid th' hull thing bare to ye, and now ye know too much."

"Why, I can't see why I need die," Billy protested. "You've told me a secret, but as long as ye intend to leave th' villain of a nephew and go over to th' wronged son, you've got nothin' to fear as I kin see."

But it was not Sharkey's intention to do anything of the kind. He had merely held that out for a bait. He was now fairly caught, and it might have gone hard with Billy had they not been interrupted just then.

"Ah-hal! my beauties, I've got ye, have I?" a voice suddenly exclaimed and on glancing up, Billy and Sharkey beheld a man standing before them—a man with a badge on his breast and a double-barreled gun in his hands.

CHAPTER XVI.

PLANNING TO ESCAPE.

BROADWAY BILLY and Sharkey Dan were both surprised, and Sharkey was not a little startled.

"I thought I'd find ye," the man continued, holding his gun well forward at full cock, "and sure enough I have. Git right up, now, both of ye, and come along with me."

"Where d'ye want us ter go to?" Sharkey demanded, as he arose to his feet.

"To th' lock-up?" Billy queried.

"You've hit it, my boy, first crack," the man answered. "To the lock-up ye go, sure pop."

Sharkey turned pale.

"What fer?" he asked.

"Ye'll soon find out, so come along."

"See here, though," cried Sharkey, "I want ter know who you be, and what right ye've got to take us up."

"Well, I'm a constable, that's who I am, and I've got a right to take ye up. I arrest ye on suspicion."

"Suspicion of what?"

"Bein' tramps?"

"No, but of bein' burglars. Oh! ye needn't look so innocent and surprised, fer I reckon we kin put it right onto ye, kerslap."

"Well, this is a purty kittle o' fish!" Billy exclaimed. "I don't much blame ye fer pullin' this feller in," jerking his thumb toward Sharkey, "fer he's got a bad face anyhow; but when it comes to 'restin' a feller of my standin', I don't see what ye kin be thinkin' about. Say, don't ye feel a little ashamed o' yerself? You'd do fer a New York policeman, you would."

Sharkey turned to Billy instantly:

"I thought ye didn't come from there," he observed.

"That's what I told ye," Billy affirmed, seeing that he had stumbled; "I git my information from th' daily papers. Jest as good as livin' there."

"Come, come!" reminded the constable, "I want ye to come along with me. Come, now, and no foolin'."

"Not till I git at th' hull of this thing," Sharkey declared. "Whosays we're burglars?"

"I say so."

"Well, ye've got th' wrong pig by th' ear fer once in yer life. I haven't been in th' town more'n an hour."

"Can't help that, ye'll have ter come with me all th' same."

"S'pose ye let me toot once now," said Billy.

"Who has been robbed 'round here?"

"I guess ye loth know well enough who. It was Farmer Joice, who lives about a mile out of town; and his hired man, who had a glimpse of th' robbers, said they was a man and a boy, or else a tall man and a very short one, and I guess you two fills th' bill."

"Guess we're in fer it," declared Billy.

"It looks like it, sure," Sharkey agreed.

Billy was in a bad way. He wanted to see George Stidwell, and he wanted to get away from Sharkey Dan; and to do either he would first have to escape from the constable.

At first he thought of calling aloud for help, and asking for George Stidwell; but he saw such a course would prove who he was to Sharkey, and would also bring out Justin Blakesland and put him on his guard.

No, that certainly would not do.

What then? He was not long in deciding. He would go with the constable, and then if he had the good luck to be put in a separate cell, he would send for young Stidwell to come and see him.

Failing in that plan, he would tell his story at the examination, which he supposed would take place in the afternoon.

"Well," he announced, "I'm ready ter go. It won't take long to prove who and what I am. As fer this other feller, he'll have to speak fer himself."

"Don't be afraid but I kin do it, youngster. I hain't got as much tongue as you, but I reckon I've got a heap more sense."

"Well," demanded the constable raising his gun threateningly, "are ye comin' or not?"

"Oh! we're comin'," growled Sharkey.

"Give us an idee which way ye want us ter go, and we'll go. There's one satisfaction, sonny," he added, turning to Billy, "I'll have you with me."

"Ye'll find it a dismal sort o' satisfaction, I'm thinkin'," the boy returned.

"Come, now, forward—march!" exclaimed the constable. "Strike right across th' field to that big tree. That's th' nearest way, and we won't bother goin' round by th' road. Don't fergit that I'm right behind ye with this gun, either."

Sharkey and the boy started off, the "minion of the law" following close upon their heels, and in this manner they were taken to the county jail.

When they arrived there it was found that there was no justice of the peace to be found, and they had to be locked up without a hearing until next day, when the justice would return.

And, despite Billy's protest, both were locked in the same cell.

This was something Billy did not at all relish. He wanted to be alone, so that he could send for George Stidwell and tell his story. Now he would either have to send for him with Sharkey's full knowledge of his intention, and tell his story in his presence, or remain silent until the morrow.

It took him some time to decide what to do, but at last he resolved to take the latter course.

"Well, Mr. Bingham," he presently inquired, "how do you like it?"

Sharkey muttered an oath to the effect that he didn't like it at all.

"Do ye know I've got an idee?" Billy remarked.

"Naw, I don't."

"Well, I have. I have an idee that you're one of th' fellers that constable was after, and if ye

are ye'd orter tell 'em that I ain't yer pard and git me out."

"Tell 'em nothin'! Even if I did, they wouldn't believe it. They'd think we was puttin' up a job to get you out, so's ye could go for help, or something like that."

"Well, say, couldn't we do that? If you could help me git out, couldn't I go and take word to some friend o' yours?"

Sharkey looked up quickly, but soon shook his head.

"It can't be done," he declared. "Besides, I couldn't trust ye. Soon's ye got out o' quod yerself ye'd fergit me. No, no, my bucky, it won't work. You've got ter stay here as long as I do. You know too much fer me to let ye out o' my sight."

"S'pose I tell it when we're examined to-morrow, how then?"

"By heavens! if ye do I'll shoot ye if I hang fer it!"

"Oh! will ye? What'll ye shoot with? Didn't th' jailer take away almost everything ye had?"

"I'll show ye what with," Sharkey hissed, and thrusting his hand inside the breast of his flannel shirt he drew forth a new Smith & Wesson revolver. "They didn't find this."

Billy sprang back with alarm more pretended than real.

"Look out! be careful!" he cried in a loud whisper; "it may go off!"

"I'm 'fraid it will go off, my laddy, if you try any fool business with me, and if it does it will be sure to hit ye."

"Oh! put it away! I won't say nothin', you kin bet. If there's any one thing I'm afeard of it's a pistol. I wouldn't touch one fer a mint."

"Well, it's a wholesome fear. I thought I could bring ye to terms. Now if you say a word of what I've told ye, or hint that I've got this plaything, I'll kill you! Don't fergit it!"

"N-no, sir; I won't."

Billy now had a plan of his own. In one end of the cell they were in, was a small window, perhaps twenty inches square, and very near the ceiling. Across it were two bars, crossed, one of which was quite badly bent, a former prisoner having attempted to escape that way. With the bars there, no matter how much they were bent, it would be impossible for Sharkey Dan to crawl through; but Billy had an idea that a boy of his size might get out with the bars just as they were. At any rate, if opportunity offered, he meant to try it, provided he could devise some plan to reach the window at all.

And as he thought it all over, a plan suggested itself, though it was one attended with no little risk.

After dinner had been served to them, Sharkey threw himself upon the rude bed, not to sleep, but to think.

Presently he sat up suddenly, and in a whisper exclaimed:

"Boy, there's a way out of this mess!"

"Is there?" Billy inquired.

"Yes, there is. D'ye see that winder up there?"

"Yes."

"Well, if them iron bars was cut off, it would be easy to git out that way."

"But th' bars is there, as big as life."

"Yes, I know they are, but we kin have 'em cut off!"

"We kin?"

"You bet we kin. Jest call th' jailer."

Billy called and the jailer came.

"Say, pardner," demanded Sharkey, "kin a feller send a telegram to New York from here?"

"Yes, if a feller's got th' money to pay fer it," was the reply.

"Well, I want to send one. I want a friend o' mine to come up here to see 'bout gittin' a lawyer."

"All right, I'll fetch ye a sheet of paper and a pencil, and ye can write it out."

In a short time the articles named were brought, and Sharkey Dan scribbled the following, which he did not allow Billy to see:

"Burke Brinton, in care of
D. O'Sullivan, No. 621 — street,
N. Y.

"Come to B— at once, and ask at the jail for me. The boy is here."

"DAN BINGHAM."

"There," he said, handing it to the jailer, with a dollar, "please send that, my friend, and keep th' change."

Late in the day Big Burke was shown into the cell, and after shaking hands with Sharkey, he turned to Billy and exclaimed:

"Well, I'll be hung! how did ye git 'way out here?"

"What did I tell ye?" cried Dan. "Ye see my pardner recognizes ye, too."

"Can't help it," declared Billy. "I'm only jest what I told ye. I must look mighty like some other feller, though."

Dan and Burke both laughed heartily, and then fell into a long and earnest whispered conversation, during which Dan pointed now and then to the little window.

At last Burke went away.

"Now," said Dan, "we'll git out o' here before mornin', my lad. My friend will come about midnight and cut th' bars on th' outside, and then help us through." And if the rascal had spoken his thoughts, he would have added: "And then we'll settle you, my little spy." But, there was no need for him to say it, for Billy f—erstood them both.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW BILLY'S PLAN WORKED.

As night came on, Broadway Billy began to study earnestly the plan he had thought of to effect his own escape.

For a long time he studied the problem, and at last resolved upon his plan of action.

"Say, Mr. Bingham," he presently said, "I s'pose it's a sure thing 'bout our gettin' out o' here, ain't it?"

"Oh! yes, we'll get out sure enough. My friend is a man to be depended on, every time."

"And when we do get out, what be ye goin' ter do with me? Be ye goin' ter let me go, then?"

"No, sir-ee! we're goin' ter take ye right along with us."

"But, ye must know that I ain't th' boy ye thought I was, and ye might as well let me go after we git out."

"Not much! I'm sure you're th' one, now, for didn't my pardner reckonize ye, too? Besides, whether ye're that one or not, ye know too much. We'll take care of you, so don't trouble your head any more 'bout that."

"Well, I hope so, anyhow. Say, though, if we git out of here together can't we be good friends? Mebby I might be able to help ye some time or other, and ye could keep me with ye all th' time, and tell folks I'm yer own boy. That would be a big thing for you, don't ye think so? I'm purty good-lookin', ye know."

"Dast yer impudence!" cried Sharkey, "d'ye s'pose I'd own ye as mine?"

"Ye'll never have one better."

"Then I'll never have any. Say, though, I'll give ye to my pardner, and ye kin call him 'daddy.'"

"No," said Billy, "I thank ye. Come, though, if ye expect ter git out o' here ter-night, Mr. Bingham, why don't ye take a look out of th' winder and see how th' land lays out there?"

"You're right!" Sharkey exclaimed, "I hadn't thought of it." And stepping up, on the stool with which the cell was supplied, he was just high enough to look out and see what lay beyond.

"What d'ye see?" Billy asked.

"Oh, not much. There's a yard with a little brick house in one corner, all fenced in, and a barn and barnyard jest t'other side."

Sharkey spent several minutes in looking around, and presently got down.

"S'pose ye won't boost me up and let me take a squint o' daylight, too, will ye?" Billy then asked.

"Yes, youngster," Sharkey answered, "I'll boost ye up; but I don't promise to hold ye there."

"No; jest let me git holt of th' bars, and I'll be all hunk."

"All right; up ye go, then."

And catching hold of the boy, he raised him up with ease, and Billy took a grip on the bars and hung there.

What he saw was about what Sharkey had described. Around the jail was a yard, inclosed with a picket fence, in one corner of which stood a little brick house. This was a smoke-house, in which hams and other meats were smoked and cured for winter use. Of course Billy knew nothing about that, but he noticed that the door of the little house stood partly open, and that a padlock, with a key in it, was hanging in the staple.

Beyond the fence were a barnyard and barn, and beyond these was a street, on the other side of which was a small field.

The jail was not situated in the heart of the town, and the houses around it were not very close together.

Billy looked all around until his arms began to ache, and then let go and dropped down.

"Well, what d'ye think, sonny?" inquired Sharkey.

"I'll tell ye what I think," Billy replied; "if we do git out o' here, I think we'll git away without much trouble."

"Jest what I thought myself."

After the two prisoners had had their supper and it became dark, Sharkey threw himself upon the narrow bed, saying:

"Boy, I'm goin' ter sleep fer a little while; you kin do as ye please. This bed ain't big enough fer only one, and I'm th' one. You kin take th' floor, or else prop yer stool up in th' corner and try that."

"Oh, I'll make out," the boy assured, "so don't trouble yer head 'bout me."

And Sharkey didn't, for in a short time he was fast asleep.

There was no sleep for Billy, however. He had too much to think about.

"Well, if I ain't jest th' onluckiest sinner out o' jail," he muttered. "Strikes me that I ain't out o' jail as much as I was afore I got in, though," he added. "Wonder how this biz is comin' out? Now, th' question is—shall I proceed accordin' to programme, or shall I back out? Echo answers—'William, proceed.' That settles it. It's a mighty big job ter tackle, and it's a mighty dangerous one; but th' way I've been a-gettin' inter trouble and out ag'in fer th' past day or two kinder nerves n.e up. If that big duffer was only asleep on th' floor instead of on th' bed, I— But, that wouldn't do. He might wake up, and then th' hull thing would be knocked inter a cocked hat. No, I've got ter do th' hull job, and there's no gettin' out of it. I bet I'm on th' high road to fame and fortune, pervided I kin git out of this box, and if I can't it won't be 'cause I don't try. I'm right on my muscle, now, and if I don't show Inspector Br—Hello! out goes th' lights!"

True enough. The hour for closing the jail for the night having arrived, nine o'clock, the lamps were put out.

The cell in which Billy was, was instantly plunged in almost total darkness, but by degrees the boy's eyes became accustomed to it, and after a while he could make out surrounding objects quite distinctly.

Half an hour or longer the boy waited, until the only sound to be heard was the snoring of his fellow prisoner, and then decided to act.

"Now fer it," he thought, as he rose up silently and picked up the stool. "I must give Sharkey a little soothin' syrup th' first thing, and then see what kin be done. I must look out, not to give him too big a dose, though, or I might finish him. Sweet pertaters, but that would be bad! I must look out fer that, sure. I wonder where's th' best place to give it to him? Let's see," feeling of his own head to locate the recent "bumps" he had received, "I've got one there and one there. I guess either place will do fer him, only I must look out not to hit too hard."

Stepping softly to the bed, the boy peered down at the sleeping man to see just how he was lying, and found that he had his face toward the wall.

"Billy," he mentally exclaimed, "I'll git a fair crack. Now," as he raised the stool, "this ain't a blow fer liberty and Ireland, but it's a crack fer Broadway Billy and Miss Warrenson's George."

Down came the stool, right upon Sharkey's unprotected head, but in his anxiety not to strike too hard, Billy did not strike half hard enough, and with a low cry of pain the villain sprang up like an enraged lion.

Billy's hair fairly stood on end.

"Sweet pertaters!" he ejaculated; "I'm in fer it now!" and drawing back the stool he aimed another blow with all his strength.

And this one was effectual. The top of the stool struck Sharkey just over the temple, and he fell back upon the bed without uttering a sound.

For some moments Billy did not move, fearing the noise had roused some one who would come to inquire the cause, but after listening attentively and hearing no one, he put down the stool.

"I reckon he's got dose enough now," he muttered. "Hope I haven't killed him. If he'd only had sense enough ter lay still th' first time, I wouldn't 'a' hit him ag'in. Had ter do it, though, fer if I hadn't he'd made mincemeat of me in no time. I guess he ain't dead, though, fer his windpump is workin'. Guess I only knocked him silly."

Placing his hand on the villain's breast to assure himself that his heart was beating, Billy found that it was, and he also found something else. His hand came in contact with the revolver Sharkey had shown him.

"By hokey! reckon I'll have ter borry this, sure. It's a reg'lar beauty, from what I seen of it. I've been monkeyed with long enough, now, and th' next feller that tries it on will git all he wants."

Thrusting in his hand the boy secured the revolver and transferred it to his own pocket, and then prepared to carry out the rest of his plan.

First of all he had to remove the now insensible man from the bed to the floor, as he had to use the bed.

This was soon done, and with little or no noise.

Then Billy carefully pulled the end of the bed up under the little window, put the stool on top and got up on it.

He could then just reach the bars, but could not get any hold that would enable him to climb out, provided it were possible to do so, which was not at all certain.

He had to work with haste, too, for he did not know at what moment Burke might appear and block him off.

"No use," he muttered, "I've got ter stick to th' 'riginal plan," and getting down he took the stool from the bed, and then the spreads and mattress as well.

The bed was one of the small, iron sort, and lifting it back the boy spread the mattress under the window, lifted one end of the bed upon it, and then going to the other end, lifted it up and stood the bed nearly upright under the window.

And it was all done so silently that no one outside of the cell could have heard a sound.

All being ready, Billy buttoned his coat up tight to his chin, felt of his improvised ladder to see that it was secure against falling, and then climbed to the top.

He was now in a good position to get out, provided the hole where the bars were bent proved large enough.

Taking off his hat he thrust his head out and looked about. All was dark and silent around, and throwing his hat out, the plucky lad proceeded to the test.

He knew it was going to be a tight squeeze, but he was determined to get out now if it took his buttons off.

Thrusting one arm and his head through first, he next tugged away until the other arm was freed, and the battle was half gained.

The walls of the jail were thick, and the sill under the window was broad, so for the time the boy's position was not as uncomfortable as it might have been.

Resting for a moment, Billy next turned over upon his back, grasped the top part of the bars with both hands, and began to wiggle to free himself entirely.

It was a pretty hard struggle, but presently he came through as far as his knees, and there he was stuck, owing to the fact that he hadn't room enough in the small space of the window to turn. So there he sat on the broad sill, his legs still sticking into the cell, his head bent over and his hands still grasping the upper bar.

He was certainly in a dilemma.

"Well, this is a purty fix!" he thought. "There's more ways'n one to skin a cat, though, and— But, that's jest th' idee! P.L. 'skin a cat' out o' here."

Every boy knows what it is to "skin a cat." We see them at it every day wherever a suitable fence or railing is handy. They catch hold with their hands, swing up, thrust their legs between their arms, turn over, and the "cat is skinned."

Thrusting down his feet to keep a firm hold of the inner sill, Billy let go with his hands and dropped over backward. Then he reached up and took a firm hold upon the outer sill, raised his feet, and out he came, and over, and down.

He struck the ground square upon his feet, but the next instant a strong hand grasped his arm, and a voice hissed:

"Ha! what means this?"

He was in the hands of Big Burke!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STARTLING SIGHT.

BILLY instantly realized that he was now in a desperate strait, and knew that only desperate means could get him out of it.

He knew that he would have to dispose of Big Burke somehow, and dispose of him effectually, too. But, how was he to do it?

To get out of his grasp was the first difficulty to be overcome.

"Say, is your name Burke?" he almost instantly asked.

"Yes," Burke growled, "that's me."

"Bully! I was afraid some of th' jail bosses had me, and that it was all up with me. Let go my arm, now. I've got somethin' to say to ye."

"Well, say it then. Ye kin talk jest as well with me a-holdin' ye, I guess."

"Yes, but ye needn't pinch so. Your friend Mr. Bingham jest boosted me out of th' winder ter go and find you."

"He did?"

"Sure pop."

"What did he send ye ter find me fer?"

"'Cause he thought ye wasn't never comin', and he's planned another way ter git out."

"Th' deuce he has! How did he expect me ter be any sooner? Did he want me to come pokin' my nose 'round 'fore th' lights went out? He must be off."

"Don't know nothin' 'bout that. All I know is what he told me."

"Well, what did he tell ye? Come, spit it out, can't ye?"

"Yes, I reckon I kin. Say, though, let go. I ain't goin' ter run off."

"No, I know ye ain't."

"No, I ain't, 'cause your friend has made me promise to be one of ye. He wants ter use me. I promised; and when I do that, I mean biz. See?"

"That's all right, but I guess I'll keep a holt of ye all th' same. Now, then, tell me what my pardner told ye ter tell me. Say, though, how did he expect ye ter find me?"

"Why, he knowed ye'd be 'round here soon, and told me ter lay low and watch fer ye."

"Oh! all right. Well, go on, now; what did he tell ye ter say ter me?"

"Why, he said, 'You tell Burke I say not to begin till midnight. Tell him I think I kin git out another way afore then, but if I don't, then he must git me out?'"

"That's what he said, eh?"

"Yes."

"What is his other plan, d'ye know?"

"Yes; he's goin' ter holler fer th' keeper, tell him I'm sick, and then soon's th' keeper comes he's goin' ter hit him a belt on th' head, and lay him out. Then he's goin' ter take th' keys away from him and open th' doors."

While rolling out this story, Billy's mind was busy trying to invent some plan to get away. He thought of the revolver in his pocket, but realized that it would be useless to attempt to use it, for Burke could snatch it away before he could do so. Besides, he did not want to use it, anyhow. If a shot were fired it would attract attention, and he might be recaptured. Consequently the revolver was as useless to him as though he had left it with its owner.

Presently he happened to think of the little brick house—the smoke-house—in the corner of the yard. If he could only entice Burke in there and lock him in— But, there was little hope of his doing it.

"So, that's his plan, is it?" Burke growled. "He'll keep on till he gits irons put on him, and then he'll be fixed so that it won't be no small job ter git him out. Where does he expect me to wait fer him?"

"Have ye noticed a little brick house here in the yard somewhere's?"

"Yes."

"Well, he said there was one, and he wants us ter go in there and hide till he gits out, or till th' time is up fer you ter begin work."

"See here! be ye tellin' th' truth?"

"Course I am! Didn't he help me up to th' winder so I could git out? Don't s'pose I could do it alone, and him there to watch me do ye?"

"Well, no, that's so."

"Course it is! Then when you go to work to cut th' bars, pervided ye have ter do it, you're to put me to watch so's nobody kin ketch ye. See?"

"Yes, that's so. I hadn't thought of that. Shark—I mean my pardner—ain't so slow, after all. Come 'long and we'll git inter th' little house as he says." And still holding Billy tightly by the arm, he led him forward.

This was more than the boy had counted on. Once inside the smoke-house himself, with Big Burke to watch him, he would be as badly off, almost, as he was in the jail.

There was no help for it though, for Burke kept hold of him and led him on and in, pulling the door almost shut behind them.

The place had a smoky smell, but was not just then in use, hence the reason for its being unlocked and open.

Burke felt around with his foot and found something to sit down on—an old basket, and pulling Billy down upon the ground just in front of him, sat down, letting go his hold of the boy's arm as he did so.

Billy had a fair chance to shoot the man then, and was strongly tempted to do so, but seeing the folly of doing so cowardly a thing, he

desisted. It would have been cowardly, because his own life was in no immediate danger, and because the man would be taken unawares, as he could not see the peril. Moreover, if the shot proved fatal, it would be no less than a deliberate murder.

He must devise some other way out of the difficulty.

"So my pardner made ye promise to be one of us, did he?" Burke queried.

"Yes, sir," Billy answered.

"And d'ye mean to stick to yer word?"

"You bet I do! Didn't he say he'd kill me if I didn't?"

"He did, eh?"

"He did, fer a fact."

Burke had his own ideas in regard to that. He did not doubt the boy's story, how could he? for without Sharkey's help, he thought, he certainly could not have escaped; but he doubted that Sharkey wanted to make use of the boy. He had simply sent him out for him to watch until he escaped from the jail, and then together they would put him out of the way.

At any rate he meant to keep close guard over the lad, and as a precaution he sat with one foot resting upon Billy's leg.

Burke talked steadily, and Billy had to clear the cobwebs from his brain and invent more solid fiction than he had ever before attempted in his life. And thus full two hours passed away.

To Billy these two hours seemed to be an age, and at last, unable to stand it any longer, he said:

"Say, ain't it most midnight? I don't believe your friend is goin' ter git out alone, do you?"

"It looks like it, sure," Burke answered. "Let's see what time it is, anyhow," and taking out his watch he wet a match with his lips, rubbed it between his finger and thumb to produce a faint light—"why, it's 'most a quarter to twelve!"

"Most time to git to biz, ain't it?"

"Yes; we'll wait till plump twelve, and then fer it!"

At that moment Sharkey's voice was heard, calling loudly for the keeper. He had just come-to, and realized what had taken place, and not pausing to think how late it might be, nor that he was spoiling his own chance for escape, began sounding the alarm of the boy's flight.

"Th' blamed ijjit!" exclaimed Burke. "He's bound ter spile it all! Why didn't he let it go, after puttin' it off this long, and trust all to me? Hang me, if I ever see sich a— Ugghh!"

Broadway Billy had jumped suddenly up and given him a kick in the stomach, knocking him off the basket and over on the ground upon his back.

Billy had been planning this move for some time, and when he heard Sharkey begin to call for the keeper, he knew at once what was up, and knew that he must act instantly or not at all; so while Burke was forgetful of his presence for the moment, he acted.

The instant Burke went over Billy sprang out the door, closed it, pulled the lock from the staple, clasped the hasp over it, slipped the lock back and turned the key, and then put the key into his pocket.

"Good-night, Burkey!" he called out, as loudly as he dared, and then climbing over the fence he crossed the barnyard, climbed the other fence, and then took to his heels down the street as though the Old Boy were after him.

Nor did he pause until he was a long distance away.

Meanwhile Sharkey Dan's cries had brought an assistant jailer to his cell, and as soon as it was discovered that Billy was gone, an alarm was sounded; but it was useless, for Billy was not to be found. And Burke, in his "private cell," dared not call for help, well knowing that if he did he would be arrested on suspicion, and Sharkey, as soon as he found how late it was, swore inwardly to think how he had spoiled the chances for his own escape.

Billy had played them all a clever trick.

The boy did not cease running till he had crossed the railroad tracks and was half way across a field on the other side. Then he stopped for breath.

"Sweet pertaters!" he gasped, "I wonder what next! If my luck ain't enough to make a sinner weep, then I don't know chalk from cheese. Jest score one mark on my side, anyhow, fer I reckon I've got square with Sharkey and Burke fer throwin' me inter that hole last night. Won't Sharkey be howlin' mad though! I don't want him ter git holt of me now, you bet! I'm glad I heard Sharkey holler, fer I was a little 'fraid he'd kicked th' bucket after

all. Lordy! but that would been bad fer me, I'm thinkin'!

"Now, William of Broadway, what are ye goin' ter do next? Don't somethin' kind o' urge ye ter go to th' Stidwell mansion and take a survey of th' place? Does, fer a fact; guess there's where you'd better go, sweet William; so, forward—march!

"Sweet pertaters! but *ain't* I sweatin' some! I couldn't want ter run like that ag'in on sich a warm night, not fer a Jersey cow, horns and tail throwed in!"

It was indeed a warm night, and as Billy turned in the direction of the Stidwell place, he mopped the perspiration from his face.

There was no moon, but the night was a clear one, and there was light enough to enable the boy to find his way with but little trouble, and ere long he came to the fence in the rear of Mr. Stidwell's house.

It was now after midnight.

Going to the end of the fence, Billy slipped between it and the hedge and found himself in the garden.

"Now, if there happens ter be a big dog 'round here," he mused, "it will jist put th' finishin' touch to my scrapes; and it may finish me too."

But no dog was heard, and he made his way cautiously toward the house.

He had really no definite idea of what he intended to do, but thought he might find some place where he could crawl away and sleep till morning when he would inquire for George Stidwell.

As he drew near to the house he saw there was a light in one of the rooms on the ground floor, a room on the side and near the front; and thinking it might be George Stidwell's room, and that he could get a chance to speak to him, Billy made his way around to the window where the light shone.

He found there was a broad piazza there, and that the window, a long one that reached down to the floor, was wide open, and that heavy lace curtains hung inside.

Determined to carry his investigation a little further, the boy crept silently up the steps of the piazza on hands and knees, and so on to the window, and looked in.

What he saw was—first, a bed with some one in it, near which stood a small table with a bottle and spoon upon it; and second, a man lying asleep on a sofa on the other side of the room.

It was the room in which Mr. Stidwell was lying so ill.

While he looked, Billy saw a door open and Justin Blakesland glide noiselessly into the room. He looked carefully at both the man in the bed and the one on the sofa, and then, with a demoniacal smile, stepped to the table and took up the bottle of medicine, opened it, and dropped into it the contents of a tiny vial.

Knowing Blakesland as he did, this was to Billy a startling sight.

CHAPTER XIX.

VICTORIOUS BILLY.

"Sweet per-taters!" the boy mentally exclaimed, "what's he doin'?" and leaning forward he watched the rascal with intense interest.

"It strikes me somebody must be sick in there," his thoughts ran, "and jest as like as not that villain is tryin' to p'izen him. Jest look at his face! If he only had a pair of horns, I'd think he was th' Old Boy fer sure. Yes sir-ee! I'll bet that's jest what he's doin'; and I wonder if I can't block his little game? I've got ter have it out with him sooner or later, anyhow, and if it is p'izen he's puttin' inter that bottle, I'll have th' deadwood on him so tight he can't squirm. Now I ain't got more'n a day or two ter make up my mind in, so I've got ter make it up right now; and— By th' Stars and Stripes, I'll do it!" And pulling his "borrowed" revolver from his pocket, Billy drew apart the lace curtains and slipped into the room.

Having put the poison into the medicine, Blakesland set the bottle down, and was just turning to leave the room when the boy called out.

"Say, Mr. Villain Blakesland, hadn't ye better hold on a minnit? This revolver I've got p'inted at ye is jest itchin' ter go off, and if it does it'll bore a hole clear through ye, sure pop. I— Hold on! if ye make a move I'll let drive!"

At the first sound Blakesland had turned like a flash, his face ghastly pale, and for a moment stood as though turned to stone. Then he took a step forward toward the boy, but the gleam-

ing revolver held him at bay. And the nurse, hearing Billy's voice, now sprung to his feet.

"Stand right there!" Billy cautioned, "and don't ye move one inch, fer if ye do I'll pull. I'm only a boy, but this thing I've got hold of shoots a man-size bullet, and don't ye fail ter bear it in mind. I mean *biz*. I'm up to yer game, and I'm goin' ter see fair play, you bet!"

"Say," turning his eyes for a brief second to the nurse, "who be you?"

"I'm the nurse," the man answered.

"Yes, and a healthy old nurse ye be, too, fallin' asleep on watch! Say, is Mr. George Stidwell in this house?"

"Yes, he is."

"Call him, then, double quick. Tell him th' boy that helped him out of th' river wants ter see him."

Glad to get out of the room, the nurse hastened to obey.

"Fiends!" Justin now hissed, "lower that weapon, you young hound! and let me escape, or I'll kill you!"

"Kill ahead, old hoss! Ye've tried all th' killin' you'll ever do, I gue s. I've got ye."

"Stand out of my way, I tell you, and let me go!"

"Nary a go! You'll go to prison, though I reckon. I bet—"

"Bang!"

Footsteps were heard coming, and in despair the rascal made a sudden spring and tried to dodge past the boy and escape through the window; but, quick as a flash, Billy turned the revolver toward him and fired, the bullet taking effect in his leg, and he fell to the floor.

The next moment George Stidwell and Doctor Pindar dashed into the room, followed by the nurse, and in a minute afterward the whole household was astir.

Mr. Stidwell, of course, did not wake.

"What means this?" George instantly demanded.

"I'll tell ye what it means," answered Billy, promptly; "it means that that's th' foul villain that had you tapped on th' head and pitched inter th' river, and now he's been puttin' somethin' inter that bottle o' medicine."

"Impossible!" George gasped.

"It is a lie!" screamed Justin, as he writhed in pain on the floor.

"No it ain't; it's jest the solid *truth*!" Billy protested.

At that moment Mr. Warrenson and his daughter entered.

"Look, papa, it is Billy!" the young lady cried, instantly.

"Why, so it is, Mr. Warrenson agreed.

"What! you know this boy?" demanded George.

"Yes, George; he saved my life the other day," Winnie explained.

"Saved *your* life?"

"Yes."

"And he says he is the boy who saved mine last night."

"Can it be possible?"

"Bet yer life it is!" cried Billy, "and that skunk there is th' one that hired Sharkey Dan and Big Burke to kill ye. I heard th' plan, and I chipped in my nickel jest in time. Oh! I've got th' deadwood on him, *sure*!"

"But these men you name; who—where are they?"

"Well, one's up in the jail in this town, and t'other is locked in a little brick house in th' jail-yard, and there's th' key that's keepin' him there!" and Billy displayed the padlock key.

Doctor Pindar, having secured the bottle of medicine, was now attending to the wound Justin had received.

Of a sudden George thought of his father, and sprung to the bed, but the doctor assured him that he was all right, and sleeping.

"And this story of poison—*can* it be true?" George asked.

"It is true," the doctor declared. "Doctor Hammlin detected it this morning, and this bottle was left on purpose to tempt the poisoner."

"Oh, Justin, Justin!" and burying his face in his hands, George sobbed aloud.

Broadway Billy still held the revolver in his hand, and Mr. Warrenson told him he had better put it away, asking:

"Where did you get it?"

Billy explained, and then briefly told his whole story.

His listeners could hardly believe it was true, except Miss Warrenson, who was loud in her praise of Billy's bravery.

"But, what is to be done?" asked George.

"Advise me, Mr. Warrenson, for I hardly know what I am doing."

"What is to be done, you ask?" the clear-minded merchant answered. "Why, first of all send to the jail and see that the two prisoners are doubly secured, and at the same time send for a magistrate to come here. This boy's story must be accepted and investigated, and— Good heavens!"

Justin Blakesland had pushed Doctor Pindar aside, and now exclaimed:

"No need to call an officer here, unless it be the coroner. I am guilty—I confess it all. The boy's story is true, curse him!" And then, before any one could move to interfere, the wretch placed his vial of poison, which he had thrust into his vest pocket, to his lips and swallowed its entire contents—enough to kill a dozen men!

Its action, in that concentrated shape, was almost instantaneous.

A few convulsive movements, a few gasps for breath, and he was dead!

All present stood horrified.

As soon as George Stidwell could move to action he sent men to the jail, and the two rascals there were put in irons and doubly secured.

Broadway Billy, of course, was the hero of the hour.

Next morning when Doctor Hammlin came, the bottle of medicine was tested, and the poison was found, though that proof amounted to nothing then. And soon after the test old Mr. Stidwell awoke.

The news was kept from him for the present, of course, though he was so much improved in health and spirits that he could no doubt have stood the shock; and the doctors both declared that it was only a question of a few days when he would be up and around.

And their words fell true.

To give in detail all that followed is unnecessary. Broadway Billy had brought the villains to bay so effectually that nothing remained to be done except to apply the law to them.

Justin Blakesland was beyond the reach of human law, but Sharkey Dan and Big Burke were made to suffer the full penalty for their misdeeds. They both confessed, and both swore hatred undying for the brave boy who had, alone and unaided, run them down.

Nor did the keeper of the saloon, where they had made their headquarters, escape, for his license was taken from him and he was warned to leave the city.

Mr. Stidwell fully recovered, and is to-day a hale and hearty old man, and he and Mr. Warrenson are still the best of friends. In truth, they are now more strongly attached to each other than before, if that is possible, and why should they not be, since George and Minnie are now man and wife?

And Broadway Billy—he is Broadway Billy still. George Stidwell wanted to send him to a good school for a few years, but Billy would not hear to it.

"Not much!" he said. "I'm much 'bliged to ye, but I'd be out o' my element at that *biz*. I'm goin' ter stick to Broadway till I kin buy out that corner-stand I've got my eye on, and then I'm goin' inter *biz*. In th' meantime I sha'n't let slip any chance I may see ter do a little detective work, and some o' these days I'll be one of Inspector Br— No, nor I don't want no money-help, either. I'm goin' ter be self-made, or I'll be nothin'. That's *my* platform, you bet!"

So, Billy is still to be seen on the street, and is not aware that in a certain bank which he passes and repasses every day, stand a thousand dollars to his credit. His mother knows it, though, and she is holding his bank-book in keeping for him.

Billy recently had another "set to" with his old enemy—Pug-nose Jake, and came out "first best," as he declares he always will.

"Skinny," his little friend, and he are chums now, and Billy promises him that as soon as he gets that stand, he shall be his partner; so Skinny is working hard to save up the necessary money.

Billy frequently sees his friends—George and Winnie Stidwell, and the two old gentlemen, and they always have a pleasant word for him. Should he ever need friends or assistance, he knows where to apply.

And so, for the present, we leave him, the hero and champion of his companions, and a terror to all evil-doers who come in his way.

Only last evening we saw him, passing along with his box on his shoulder and shouting:

"Shine, sir? Shine? Shine 'em up so slick ye'll paralyze yer mother-in-law th' instant ye git home. Shine, sir? Shine?"

And on his box was the name—"Broadway Billy."

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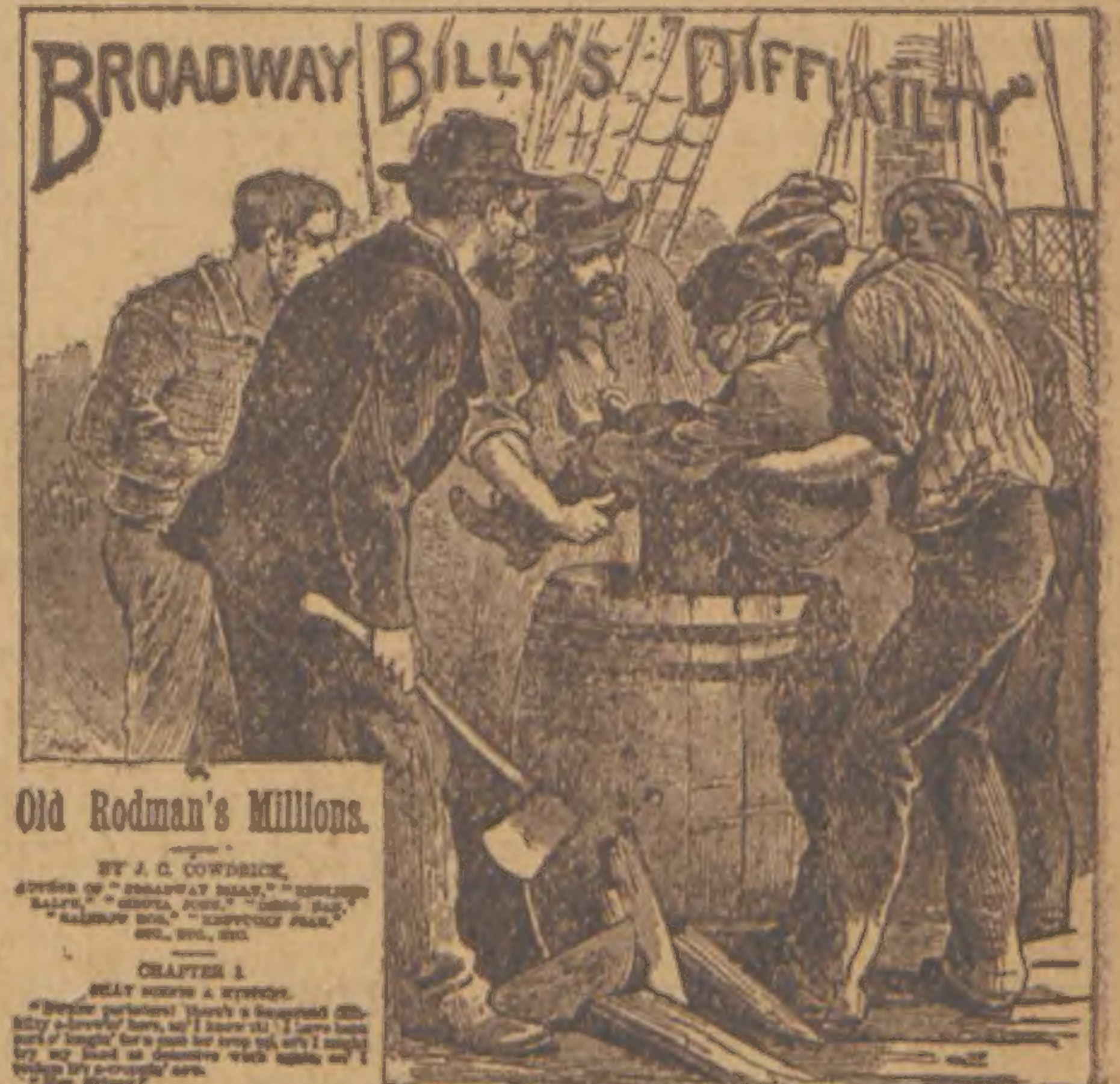


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